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Programme questions: evaluation

Report of the Office of Internal Oversight Services on further development of topics for a pilot thematic evaluation

Note by the Secretary-General

In conformity with General Assembly resolutions 48/218 B of 29 July 1994 and 54/244 of 23 December 1999, the Secretary-General has the honour to transmit herewith the report of the Office of Internal Oversight Services on further development of topics for a pilot thematic evaluation, as requested by the Committee for Programme and Coordination. The Secretary-General takes note of its findings and concurs with its recommendations.

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Report of the Office of Internal Oversight Services on further development of topics for a pilot thematic evaluation

Summary

The present report has been prepared in response to the request by the Committee for Programme and Coordination that the Office of Internal Oversight Services (OIOS) further develop topics for a pilot thematic evaluation for consideration by the Committee at its forty-fourth session (A/58/16, paras. 529-530).

Thematic evaluations will focus entirely on a single, cross-cutting theme or activity. By providing a systemic assessment of a specific issue or topic, these evaluations can provide strategic and timely information for decision-making with regard to programme content, structure, implementation and results as well as an assessment of coordination and cooperation on the same theme between different programmes in the United Nations. Thematic evaluations can also play a role in strengthening the monitoring and evaluation capacity of the United Nations system, as called for by the Secretary-General's reform.

OIOS is suggesting three themes that address current issues and concerns of the United Nations and that would benefit from a thematic evaluation. These are: (a) information systems supporting the implementation of Millennium Declaration and other internationally agreed development goals; (b) linkages between headquarters and field activities: a review of best practices in the development arena; and (c) contribution of the United Nations to the prevention of and response to natural disasters. Alternatively, the Committee for Programme and Coordination may want to decide on another theme based on the analyses and criteria discussed in the present report.

After consideration of the present report, the Committee for Programme and Coordination may wish to commission OIOS to conduct a pilot thematic evaluation that will be submitted at its forty-fifth session and subsequently reviewed at its forty-sixth session.

Contents

		Paragraphs	Page
I.	Introduction	1–2	4
II.	Thematic evaluations	3–14	4
	A. Definition	3	4
	B. Thematic evaluations in comparison to in-depth evaluations	4–5	4
	C. Benefits	6–10	5
	D. Selection criteria	11–13	6
	E. Role in the Secretary-General's reform of the United Nations	14	7
III.	Proposed evaluation themes	15–18	7
	A. Possible themes for consideration	15–17	7
	B. Evaluation proposals	18	10
	1. Information systems for implementing the Millennium Declaration and other internationally agreed development goals		10
	2. Linkages between headquarters and field activities: a review of best practices in the development arena		12
	3. Contribution of the United Nations to the prevention of and response to natural disasters		13
IV.	Conclusions and recommendation	19–21	15

I. Introduction

1. At its forty-third session, the Committee for Programme and Coordination decided to defer to its forty-fourth session the selection of a topic for thematic evaluation, for submission to the Committee at its forty-fifth session and subsequent review at its forty-sixth session. The Committee also requested the Office of Internal Oversight Services (OIOS) to further develop topics by elaborating the context, objective, scope, methodology and intended utilization of the findings of proposals for a pilot evaluation. The present report has been prepared in response to that request.

2. Three methods were used for the preparation of the present report: (a) a survey of the programmes of the medium-term plan conducted by OIOS in January and February 2004 regarding the utility of thematic evaluations as well as suggestions for possible themes (18 of 26 programmes responded); (b) a review and analysis of the priority areas of the 2002-2005 medium-term plan, the Millennium Declaration and other internationally agreed development goals, General Assembly resolutions adopted at the fifty-seventh and fifty-eighth sessions and issues discussed at recent United Nations summits and conferences; and (c) consultations with other evaluation offices within the United Nations concerning their experiences with conducting thematic evaluations.

II. Thematic evaluations

A. Definition

3. Thematic evaluations will focus entirely on a single, cross-cutting theme or activity. With their focus on a single theme, thematic evaluations assess the cumulative effects of multiple programmes that share common goals and purposes and provide an assessment of coordination and cooperation between different programmes of the United Nations.

B. Thematic evaluations in comparison to in-depth evaluations

4. The in-depth evaluations currently conducted by OIOS are comprehensive reviews of a single programme of the medium-term plan. They follow a 10- to 12-year cycle and contribute to the executive and legislative assessments and planning of the programmes of the Organization.

5. While meeting a particular need for comprehensive review, in-depth evaluations do, however, have a number of limitations. Specifically, in-depth evaluations:

- Cannot assess the broader outcomes of several programmes that share common objectives
- Focus only on the objectives of the programme being evaluated and therefore may not sufficiently focus on more current issues and priorities and
- Have a smaller audience since, by their nature, they focus solely on a single programme.

C. Benefits

6. The addition of thematic evaluations to the OIOS work plan would broaden the range of its evaluative tools and approaches. In particular, thematic evaluations would provide a different type of review as well as a different perspective from what is currently offered by in-depth evaluations.

7. Thematic evaluations offer several significant benefits, including:

Greater relevance. Thematic evaluations can focus on current United Nations issues and strategies and provide a systemic assessment of cross-cutting issues. They can answer the most pertinent questions and provide timely information when it is needed.

Increased timeliness. Since thematic evaluations are topic-specific rather than programme-specific, several programmes can be evaluated simultaneously, which would increase the frequency with which important activities of individual programmes are reviewed.

More opportunities for strengthening coordination. Thematic evaluations can identify ways in which to improve and enhance the coordination and collaboration of United Nations programmes sharing similar goals and objectives.

Improved focus on results. Thematic evaluations would look at cross-cutting outcomes, with an increased emphasis on measuring impact.

Enhanced responsiveness. Thematic evaluations can be used by senior managers from several different programmes to identify ways in which to improve the efficiency and effectiveness of their programmes.

8. Thematic evaluations can also provide information that would assist the Committee for Programme and Coordination in meeting its mandate. Specifically, the Committee for Programme and Coordination is mandated to review programmes of the United Nations as defined in the medium-term plan (including giving guidance to the Secretariat on programme design) and to assist the Economic and Social Council in the performance of its coordination functions within the United Nations. The Committee needs strategic and timely information to inform its deliberations and decision-making with regard to programme design, implementation and results. In addition, it needs reliable and valid assessments of coordination and collaboration within the United Nations. As previously discussed, thematic evaluations can meet both of these needs.

9. All respondents to the OIOS survey (representing 18 different programmes) stated that thematic evaluations would be useful to their department or office. More specifically, respondents believed that thematic evaluations would: encourage interdisciplinary approaches and cooperation among United Nations programmes; prove useful for the purposes of planning, policy-making and strategic goal setting; improve programme performance and relevance; and provide an assessment of issues and topics in which several different programmes play a role. Additionally, some respondents said that thematic evaluations could yield useful lessons learned and best practices, which could be used to inform future policy formulations.

10. Several United Nations entities have evaluation offices that conduct thematic evaluations and their experiences can provide useful insights into the practice and

benefits of these reviews. The United Nations Children's Fund (UNICEF) undertakes evaluations that are focused on the priorities of its medium-term strategic plan, operational issues and cross-cutting themes, such as modalities of partnerships. According to staff, this approach has enhanced both resource utilization and results. The United Nations Development Programme (UNDP) identifies topics for its evaluations by first meeting with its governing body for suggestions and then consulting with senior managers to select the most strategic cross-cutting topics for review. It then attempts to narrow the scope of these topics in order to make them more manageable. Staff informed OIOS that UNDP uses these evaluations to "feed into decision-making". The Office for the Coordination of Humanitarian Affairs has developed a three-year strategy for its evaluations that is based on six activities, including system-wide evaluations to consider the response of the United Nations to specific thematic issues. According to OCHA staff, these are typically "hot issues", which are demand driven. The evaluations are worked on jointly with other agencies in the United Nations and are used as management and learning tools.

D. Selection criteria

11. Topics selected for thematic evaluations should fall within the OIOS mandate to determine as systematically as possible "the relevance, efficiency, effectiveness and impact of the Organization's activities in relation to their objectives" (ST/SGB/2000/8, regulation 7.1). OIOS, as a central internal oversight body, is well positioned to contribute to an assessment of the United Nations in a way that evaluation units attached to individual departments and offices are not. One respondent to the OIOS survey represented the views of others by stating, "with [OIOS] expertise in dealing with cross-cutting issues and knowledge of the experience of other departments/offices, [OIOS] is in a better position to deal with general topics".

12. OIOS has used the following criteria to propose topics for in-depth evaluations to the Committee for Programme and Coordination: (a) the importance of the programmes in relation to the priorities of the current medium-term plan; (b) intergovernmental reviews of programmes taking place in the near future; and (c) balanced coverage of all the programmes of the medium-term plan. While these criteria could also prove useful in selecting topics for thematic evaluations, selection need not be constrained by these three criteria alone.

13. OIOS proposes the following general criteria for selection of topics for thematic evaluations:

- Adequate coverage of the programmes of the Organization
- Schedule of related intergovernmental reviews
- Timeliness of the review
- Significance of the issues being addressed
- Strategic importance to the United Nations
- Contribution to improving the programmes of the United Nations.

E. Role in the Secretary-General's reform of the United Nations

14. The Secretary-General's agenda for United Nations reform calls for strengthened monitoring and evaluation. The Secretariat is considering various strategies to enhance the evaluation capacity of the Organization. Examples of these strategies include better use of evaluation results for programme planning and updating the evaluation format and presentations to make evaluations more pertinent and useful to intergovernmental bodies and programme managers. It is the opinion of OIOS that its undertaking of thematic evaluations will contribute to the strengthening of the evaluation capacity of the United Nation.

III. Proposed evaluation themes

A. Possible themes for consideration

15. In its above-mentioned survey, OIOS asked respondents to suggest possible themes for evaluation. Fifteen of the 18 respondents, representing 15 different programmes, offered suggestions, which are shown in table 1 below. The main reasons respondents gave for suggesting these themes is that they were of high priority to their programme or to the Organization and/or that the themes identified an area of concern that warranted further study.

Table 1
OIOS survey
Suggestions for themes

Broad theme	*Related topics*[a]	*Number of respondents suggesting theme*[b]
Development	• Information and communication technologies (ICT) for development • Development partnerships among United Nations programmes • Role of the United Nations in implementing the Millennium Declaration and other internationally agreed development goals: resource mobilization and achievement • United Nations capacity-building in development • Promoting good governance for sustainable development • Links between peace and development	8
Information systems of the United Nations	• ICT for development • United Nations web sites • Millennium Declaration and other internationally agreed development goals: statistics, data collection, analysis, monitoring and knowledge sharing • Knowledge management • Communicating the United Nations message in the Middle East	7

Broad theme	*Related topics*[a]	*Number of respondents suggesting theme*[b]
Role/collaboration of United Nations with civil society	• Role of the United Nations in government policy-making (gender mainstreaming and integration of sustainable development) • Role of the United Nations in the follow-up by Governments to international agreements • Role of the United Nations in implementing the Millennium Declaration and other internationally agreed goals: resource mobilization and achievement • Contribution of the United Nations to the prevention of and response to natural disasters • Effectiveness of the United Nations in engaging civil society to pursue United Nations goals • Role of the United Nations in crime prevention and human trafficking • United Nations capacity-building in development • Promoting good governance for sustainable development	6
Operations and governance of the United Nations	• Development partnerships among United Nations programmes • Governance structure of United Nations bodies • Maintenance of a flexible work force to cope with emergencies • Gender mainstreaming in the Secretariat • Integrated humanitarian missions • Cost-effectiveness of United Nations programmes and activities • Coordination and consolidation of monitoring and evaluation	6
Peacekeeping and peace-building	• Exit strategies for peacekeeping operations • Development of regional peace strategies • Post-conflict peace-building • Implementation of disarmament, demobilization and reintegration programmes • Use of quick-impact projects in peacekeeping operations • Links between peace and development • Interface between human rights and peacemaking	3

[a] Some topics relate to more than one theme.

[b] Some respondents suggested more than one topic for each theme and some topics were suggested by more than one respondent.

16. In order to identify current United Nations issues and priorities, OIOS also reviewed and analysed the following United Nations documents: (a) the medium-term plan (focusing, in particular, on its priority areas); (b) the Millennium Declaration and other internationally agreed development goals; and (c) resolutions adopted at the fifty-seventh and fifty-eighth sessions of the General Assembly. OIOS also reviewed the issues discussed at recent United Nations conferences and summits. The results of this analysis are presented in table 2 below.

Table 2
OIOS review of United Nations documents

Broad theme	*Medium-term plan 2002-2005*	*Millennium Declaration and other internationally agreed development goals*	*General Assembly resolutions: fifty-seventh and fifty-eighth sessions*
Maintenance of peace and security	x	x	x
Disarmament	x	x	x
Promotion of human rights	x	x	x
Promotion of sustainable development[a,b,c]	x	x	x
Poverty alleviation[b,c]	x	x	x
Improving humanitarian assistance	x	x	x
Combating drugs, crime and terrorism[d,a]	x		x
Promotion of global partnerships[a,b,c,d,e]		x	x
Promoting coordination between United Nations agencies		x	x
Promotion of justice and international law[d]	x	x	x

[a] Discussed at the World Summit on the Information Society (2003).
[b] Discussed in the Johannesburg Plan of Implementation (2002).
[c] Discussed in the Monterrey Consensus (2002).
[d] Discussed at the United Nations Convention against Corruption (2003).
[e] Discussed in the World Trade Organization Doha Declaration (2001).

17. The broad themes highlighted in both tables above can be reviewed with two different approaches: systemic and substantive. It is the opinion of OIOS that the Committee for Programme and Coordination would best be served by a thematic evaluation focusing on the former rather than the latter approach. For example, an evaluation on poverty alleviation would be too broad and very difficult to examine in-depth; in contrast, an evaluation that looked at the United Nations poverty alleviation programmes that are in place could prove more useful. A systemic rather than a substantive approach would lead to the identification of systemic problems and solutions, and therefore to systemic action. Furthermore, the topic for a thematic evaluation should be sufficiently examined and targeted so as to enable a timely and practical review; an evaluation that is too broad in scope will be too diffuse and, therefore, of only limited use.

B. Evaluation proposals

18. OIOS proposes that the Committee for Programme and Coordination decide on a theme for a pilot thematic evaluation at its forty-fourth session. To facilitate this decision, three themes are suggested and elaborated on below:

1. Information systems for implementing Millennium Declaration and other internationally agreed development goals;
2. Linkages between headquarters and field activities: a review of best practices in the development arena;
3. Contribution of the United Nations to the prevention of and response to natural disasters.

These three themes are offered as proposals that would be illustrative of the scope, methodology and reporting that can be expected of thematic evaluations.

1. Proposed theme
Information systems for implementing the Millennium Declaration and other internationally agreed development goals

Context

In 2000, Member States of the United Nations adopted the Millennium Declaration, which establishes common goals for peace and security, development, human rights, democracy and good governance. In particular, the Declaration includes eight specific, time-bound development goals; all Member States have pledged to meet these goals by 2015. The goals reflect a growing consensus on what constitutes human development and include, among other targets, a reduction by half in the proportion of people living in poverty and the achievement of universal primary education for all children.

The Secretary-General reports annually on progress made in meeting these eight development goals. Therefore, the systems that are in place to collect, analyse and report on relevant data are crucial to assuring that any measurement of progress is both valid and reliable. Furthermore, since the goals relate to a variety of topics, encompassing a wide group of United Nations programmes, coordination and sharing of information is particularly important.

In 2003, the United Nations Development Programme (UNDP) evaluation office issued a report, *Millennium Development Goals Reports: An Assessment*, which examined the current reporting processes for these goals and assessed the quality, relevance and value added of country level reports for measuring progress. The assessment identified a lack of clarity regarding the real added value of these reports, major gaps in statistical reporting, concerns about data quality and limited strategic thinking on how the United Nations can contribute to the achievement of the goals.

Objective

The main objective of this evaluation would be to identify and assess the current approach of the various organizations of the United Nations system active in collecting, analysing and sharing information on implementing the Millennium

Declaration and other internationally agreed development goals. In addition, the evaluation would review how the organizations of the system coordinate their activities and how they interact as well as identifying opportunities for increased efficiency.

Scope

This evaluation would provide an overall assessment of the capacity of the United Nations system to provide timely, accurate and useful information on progress in achieving the development goals. The evaluation would examine mechanisms for collecting and analysing data and would assess the quality of that data. It would suggest improvements for monitoring and tracking progress and address the issue of knowledge sharing among the different United Nations programmes.

Methodology

The evaluation would use a multi-method approach, combining both quantitative and qualitative methods, including: surveys of programme and government officials; interviews with experts from relevant organizations; a review of recent studies in the area, a review of policies, procedures and outcomes; and an assessment of pertinent programme data.

Since this is a cross-cutting theme that would encompass a review of the work of multiple programmes, the evaluation would be carried out with the collaboration of evaluation units and officials of United Nations departments and offices concerned with information systems and development issues. Other organizations with relevant activities in this sector would also be consulted.

Utilization of findings

In order to provide a systemic response to the findings and recommendations of the evaluation it would be submitted for consideration to all interested United Nations programmes as well as to the following intergovernmental bodies:

- Regional commissions
- Commission on Sustainable Development
- Commission for Social Development
- Commission on Science and Technology for Development
- Commission on Population and Development
- Statistical Commission
- Economic and Social Council, normally through the Committee for Programme and Coordination, as stipulated in rule 107.4 (f) of the Regulations and Rules Governing Programme Planning, the Programme Aspects of the Budget, the Monitoring of Implementation and the Methods of Evaluation.

2. Proposed theme
Linkages between headquarters and field activities: a review of best practices in the development arena

Context

Recent global conferences and the Millennium Declaration have helped to articulate and focus the development agenda of the United Nations. In this agenda, the two aspects of United Nations programmes, implemented at headquarters and in the field, are equally relevant. Activities at headquarters are primarily engaged in norm-setting, policy formulation and analytical activities, while in the field they are concerned with operational and direct assistance to countries. Ideally, the two aspects should be both complementary and mutually reinforcing. The linkages between the two should also facilitate an interface between global policies and national action, as well as between research, policy and operational activities.

Objective

The main objective of this evaluation would be to assess the linkages between the norm setting, policy formulation and analytical activities of the headquarters locations with the operational and assistance activities of the field. In particular, the evaluation would focus on identifying best practices where the relationship between these two functions has resulted in enhancing development capacity at the national level.

Scope

This evaluation would provide an overall assessment of how the activities of the headquarters locations affect and contribute to field operations in the development arena. The evaluation would identify best practices where these linkages have been particularly useful in promoting the United Nations development agenda and assisting countries in reaching their development goals.

In order to scope to allow for a more targeted and useful review, the evaluation could focus on the linkages between the activities of headquarters and field locations for one particular aspect of development, such as poverty alleviation or education. It could also use a few different countries or regions as case studies to identify and review best practices as well as lessons learned from past experiences.

Methodology

The evaluation would use a multi-method approach, combining both quantitative and qualitative methods, including: surveys of programme and government officials; interviews with experts from relevant organizations; a review of recent studies in the area; a review of policies, procedures and outcomes; and an assessment of any pertinent programme data.

Since this is a cross-cutting theme that would encompass a review of the work of multiple programmes, the evaluation would be carried out with the collaboration of evaluation units and officials of United Nations departments and offices concerned with development issues. Other organizations with relevant activities in this sector would also be consulted.

Utilization of findings

In order to provide a systemic response to the findings and recommendations of the evaluation, it would be submitted for consideration to the following United Nations agencies and intergovernmental bodies:

- Regional commissions
- Commission on Sustainable Development
- Commission for Social Development
- Commission on Science and Technology for Development
- Commission on Population and Development
- Commission on Human Rights
- Economic and Social Council, normally through the Committee for Programme and Coordination, as stipulated in rule 107.4 (f) of the Regulations and Rules Governing Programme Planning.

3. Proposed theme
Contribution of the United Nations to the prevention of and response to natural disasters

Context

Natural disasters such as earthquakes, floods, storms and drought take a heavy toll in terms of loss of life, destruction of economic and social infrastructures and environmental damage. While such occurrences cannot be entirely anticipated or prevented, an important component of disaster prevention involves establishing systems and mechanisms to avoid or limit the adverse effects of natural disasters. Such action can reduce the vulnerability of societies when faced with these disasters.

The International Strategy for Disaster Reduction (ISDR) is the centrepiece of the United Nation's efforts to address natural disasters. The overarching goal of the strategy is to enable all societies to cope with natural hazards. The ISDR secretariat, under the direct authority of the Under-Secretary-General for Humanitarian Affairs, has been established as one of the main institutional mechanisms of the strategy. The other mechanism in place is the Inter-Agency Task Force on Disaster Reduction (IATF). The ISDR secretariat serves as the focal point within the United Nations system for the coordination of strategies and programmes for natural disaster reduction. The other programmes include the Office for the Coordination of Humanitarian Affairs, the United Nations Environment Programme (UNEP) and the United Nations Human Settlements Programme (UN-HABITAT). Within the wider United Nations system, the regional commissions and UNDP also play an important role. The ISDR secretariat also plays a role in ensuring synergies between disaster reduction and socio-economic and humanitarian strategies.

In December 2003, the General Assembly adopted resolution 58/214, entitled International Strategy for Disaster Reduction, in which the Assembly decided to convene the second World Conference on Disaster Reduction, which will be held in Kobe-Hyogo, Japan, in January 2005.

Objective

The overall objective of this evaluation would be to review how the United Nations helps prepare for and respond to natural disasters. Specifically, the evaluation would assess the coordination role of the ISDR secretariat, the results of such coordination and the activities of different United Nations programmes to anticipate, react to and mitigate the consequences of natural disasters.

Scope

This evaluation would provide an assessment of the capacity of the ISDR secretariat and the programmes it coordinates to effectively and efficiently deal with natural disasters. Additionally, the evaluation would identify opportunities for strengthening the degree of coordination and collaboration between these programmes as well as with other entities of the United Nations system, such as UNDP.

In order to make it more targeted and useful, the evaluation could focus on how the United Nations contributes to the prevention and response to, including early warning systems for, a particular kind of disaster, such as floods. It could use a few different countries or regions as case studies to review both best practices as well as lessons learned from past experiences.

Methodology

The evaluation would use a multi-method approach, combining both quantitative and qualitative methods, including: surveys of programme and government officials; interviews with experts from relevant organizations; a review of recent studies in the area; a review of policies, procedures and outcomes; and an assessment of any pertinent programme data.

Since this is a cross-cutting theme that would encompass a review of the work of multiple programmes, the evaluation would be carried out with the collaboration of evaluation units and officials of United Nations departments and offices concerned with disaster prevention and relief. Other organizations with relevant activities in this sector would also be consulted.

Utilization of findings

In order to provide a systemic response to the findings and recommendations of the evaluation, it would be submitted for consideration to the following United Nations agencies and intergovernmental bodies:

- Regional commissions
- Inter-Agency Task Force on Disaster Reduction
- Inter-Agency Standing Committee/Executive Committee on Humanitarian Affairs
- Standing Committee of the Office of the United Nations High Commissioner for Refugees (UNHCR)

- Economic and Social Council, normally through the Committee for Programme and Coordination, as stipulated in rule 107.4 (f) of the Regulations and Rules Governing Programme Planning.

IV. Conclusions and recommendation

19. **A strong case can be made for the usefulness of thematic evaluations. By providing a systemic assessment of cross-cutting issues and topics, these evaluations can provide strategic and timely information for decision-making with regard to programme content, structure, implementation and results. Furthermore, they can provide an assessment of coordination and cooperation on the same theme between different programmes in the United Nations. Thematic evaluations can also play a role in strengthening the monitoring and evaluation capacity of the United Nations system, as called for by the Secretary-General's reform.**

20. **After consideration of the present report, the Committee for Programme and Coordination may wish to commission OIOS to conduct a pilot thematic evaluation that will be submitted at its forty-fifth session and subsequently reviewed at its forty-sixth session. The Committee should consider the selection criteria suggested by OIOS as well as the three themes presented in this report when making its decision on which theme to select and should also decide what relevant intergovernmental bodies are to be involved in considering the pilot evaluation.**

21. **The Committee for Programme and Coordination may consider transmitting the pilot thematic evaluation, with the Committee's conclusions and recommendations, to the United Nations System Chief Executives Board for Coordination for action, as appropriate.**

Recommendation
Pilot thematic evaluation by the Office of Internal Oversight Services

The Committee for Programme and Coordination requests the Secretary-General to entrust the Office of Internal Oversight Services with the pilot thematic evaluation of a theme to be decided upon by the Committee. The report on the thematic evaluation will be considered by the Committee at its forty-fifth session and the usefulness of the pilot project will be reviewed by the Committee at its forty-sixth session.

(*Signed*) Dileep **Nair**
Under-Secretary-General for Internal Oversight Services

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Programme questions: evaluation

In-depth evaluation of the programme on public administration, finance and development

Note by the Secretary-General

In conformity with General Assembly resolution 48/218 B of 29 July 1994 and 54/244 of 23 December 1999, the Secretary-General has the honour to transmit herewith the report of the Office of Internal Oversight Services on the in-depth evaluation of the programme on public administration, finance and development. The report has been reviewed by the relevant departments and offices. The Secretary-General takes note of its findings and concurs with its recommendations.

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Annex

Report of the Office of Internal Oversight Services on the in-depth evaluation of the programme of public administration, finance and development

Summary

The present report reviews the achievements and shortcomings of the United Nations public administration, finance and development programme, which is implemented by the Division for Public Administration and Development Management of the Department of Economic and Social Affairs. The report covers the following activities: (a) support to intergovernmental processes; (b) exchange of information on practices of public administration; (c) technical assistance; and (d) collaboration with other entities of the United Nations system.

Since its creation in 1948, the public administration programme has evolved into a comprehensive set of normative, analytical and operational activities. In 2003, the Division for Public Administration and Development Management received additional capacity and can now address a broad range of public governance issues, including substantive support to national institutions in the social and economic governance areas.

The support provided by the Division to the intergovernmental debate on public governance and its coordinating role in promoting the global exchange of experience on national public administration practices are valuable to its major partners and to professionals in the field. The quality and relevance of its flagship publication, the *World Public Sector Report*, has been recognized. Through its substantive and material support to the Global Forums on Reinventing Government, the Division has acquired greater visibility. One of its major achievements is the establishment of a global electronic network, the United Nations Online Network in Public Administration and Finance (UNPAN), for exchanging experience on practices in public administration.

Recommendations are made to strengthen the programme and improve its performance in areas where the evaluation identified weaknesses, as follows: (a) rationalizing the scope and focus of the programme by identifying a few critical areas where it can have an impact; (b) ensuring that the work on international cooperation in tax matters, which was transferred from the Division to the Finance for Development Office, is given appropriate support and that adequate resources be allocated by the Division to its work on public finance management; (c) improving the repertoire of best practices on public administration by developing standard methodologies for identifying and compiling best practices in public administration; (d) developing an information strategy to publicize more effectively the Division's initiatives; (e) enhancing UNPAN by establishing working-level contacts with relevant organizations and reviewing the content of the network; (f) enhancing linkages and synergies between the programme's functions and themes by formulating products that would draw from the Division various functions and which would be implemented by multi-skilled teams; and (g) using existing annual inter-agency meetings on public administration to promote greater collaboration among entities of the United Nations system.

Contents

		Paragraphs	Page
I.	Mandate and methodology	1–3	4
II.	United Nations programme on public administration	4–16	4
	A. Intergovernmental framework	4–7	4
	B. Secretariat arrangements	8–16	5
III.	Support to intergovernmental processes	17–26	7
	A. Support to intergovernmental bodies	17–19	7
	B. Publications	20–22	8
	C. Repertoire of best practices	23–24	9
	D. Users and partners' feedback on the analytical activities of the Division for Public Administration and Development Management	25–26	9
IV.	Exchange of information	27–38	10
	A. High-level sharing of experiences	28–30	10
	B. Global information network on public administration	31–38	11
V.	Technical assistance	39–50	12
	A. Scope and focus of the technical assistance programme	40–41	13
	B. Value of the programme	42–44	13
	C. Patterns of expenditure	45–46	14
	D. Synergy between the normative, analytical and operational functions of the Division	47–50	15
VI.	Collaboration	51–56	15
	A. Collaboration among entities of the United Nation system	52–54	16
	B. Coordination of development assistance	55–56	17
VII.	Conclusions and recommendations	57–68	17

I. Mandate and methodology

1. The Committee for Programme and Coordination, at its forty-second session, recommended that the programme on public administration, finance and development be the subject of in-depth evaluation and that a report on the evaluation be submitted to the Committee at its forty-fourth session, in June 2004.[1]

2. The in-depth evaluation reviewed all the activities of the programme, focusing on the most recent medium-term plans for the periods 1998-2001 and 2002-2005 and their objectives. The programme is implemented by the Division for Public Administration and Development Management of the Department of Economic and Social Affairs. The present report contains the evaluation findings on the programme intergovernmental framework and secretariat arrangements (sect. II), secretariat services (sect. III), exchange of information (sect. IV), technical assistance provided by the Division to Member States to strengthen their government systems and institutions (sect. V) and collaboration between the Division and other United Nations entities (sect. VI).

3. In the conduct of the in-depth evaluation, the following categories of information were utilized by the Office of Internal Oversight Services: (a) United Nations documents; (b) information from internal sources (internal assessments and internal working documents of the Division); (c) information from previous assessments done by the Office of Internal Oversight Services; (d) structured interviews with the staff of the Division and Secretariat departments; (e) a survey of the views of the members of the Committee of Experts on Public Administration; (f) a survey of the views of a sample of the recipients of technical assistance; (g) a survey of the views of major partners of the Division, including regional commissions, other organizations of the United Nations system and non-governmental organizations; (h) direct observation of the Division's support to a major global forum on governance, United Nations expert group meetings and coordination meetings; and (i) searches of the relevant databases and various web sites.

II. United Nations programme on public administration

A. Intergovernmental framework

4. The United Nations programme on public administration was created in 1948 by the General Assembly, which saw the need for international facilities that would provide training on the principles, procedures and methods of modern administration to candidates recruited on a wide geographic basis (resolution 246 (III) of 4 December 1948). Since then, the programme has grown into a comprehensive set of activities reflecting the evolving agenda of the General Assembly and the Economic and Social Council.

5. The importance of the role of the public sector in the development process was recognized by Member States when they decided to hold a special session of the General Assembly in 1996 to consider this issue. In the resulting resolution (50/225 of 19 April 1996), the Assembly gave the programme a broad range of issues to address, namely: strengthening government capacity for policy development; administrative restructuring; civil service reform, human resources development,

public-private sector interaction, public administration training and improving performance in the public sector. The Assembly, in its resolution 56/213 of 21 December 2001, recommended that the programme focus its activities on assisting Member States in their process of reform through fostering information-sharing in public administration, building essential institutional capacity and coordinating development assistance in that field. It further requested that the programme keep under review the role of public administration in the implementation of the United Nations Millennium Declaration.

6. In 2000, the Group of Experts on Public Administration, established in 1967 to review the programme from time to time, recommended that its relations and interactions with the Economic and Social Council be strengthened. To that end, the Council, by its resolution 2001/45, restructured the Group into a Committee of Experts on Public Administration. Consisting of 24 experts appointed in their personal capacity, the Committee is responsible for reviewing critical issues of public administration and governance and for providing advice to the Council regarding new trends and strategies in this area. The Committee is to provide policy guidance and operational recommendations to Member States on how to address key issues related to the functioning of the State and providing guidance to the United Nations system in the area of public administration.

7. With the establishment of the Committee of Experts and its strengthened links with the Economic and Social Council, the programme's intergovernmental processes have become more formalized.

B. Secretariat arrangements

8. According to the medium-term plan for 2002-2005, the programme's major objectives regarding issues of public administration, public finance and public economics are: (a) to provide assistance to intergovernmental deliberations; (b) to assist Governments at their request to strengthen their policy-making and managerial capacities.[2] To reach these objectives, in addition to secretariat services to international bodies, the programme is preparing analytical studies and publications, disseminating information, providing advisory services and technical cooperation activities and collaborating with organizations of the United Nations system.

9. The programme's expected accomplishments in the results-based budgeting framework for the biennium 2002-2003 include: (a) a broader and deeper understanding by Member States of major issues of public administration, public finance and public economics; (b) improved access by Governments and international bodies to analytical tools, methodologies, information and best practices in the area of public administration and finance; and (c) improved coordination. The impact that the Division's activities reviewed in the present report had on the realization of these expected accomplishments is summarized in the conclusion of the report (see sect. VII).

1. Programme restructuring

10. The programme was affected by several restructuring steps taken during the period from 1995 to 2002, which aimed at better integrating its normative, analytical and operational activities. As a result of the latest reorganization of the Department

of Economic and Social Affairs, in early 2003, two major changes occurred in the Division's scope of work. On the one hand, the programme was broadened to include socio-economic governance by transferring to it resources that were previously available under the Division for Social Policy and Development. The objective of this reorganization was to achieve greater coherence in capacity-building by integrating into one unit support to procedural issues of public administration and substantive support to enhance the capacity of countries to realize the Millennium Development Goals.

11. On the other hand, the reorganization of the Department in early 2003, support to the Ad Hoc Group of Experts on International Cooperation in Tax Matters provided by the Division of Public Administration and Development Management was transferred to the newly established Financing for Development Office. The new office serves as a focal point in the Secretariat for overall follow-up to the implementation of the outcome of the International Conference on Financing for Development, including support to efforts by Governments to establish and promote rational management of tax systems and financial administration. As part of this transfer of function, two Professional posts were reassigned from the Division to the Office. In addition, departmental staff capacity on finance matters was consolidated through reassignments to the Office from other divisions within the Department. At the same time, it was decided that issues related to public finance management would remain under the responsibility of the Division. This distribution of responsibilities was subsequently confirmed in the proposed programme budget for the biennium 2004-2005.

12. The Office of Internal Oversight Services believes that, within the broader framework of financing for development for which the Financing for Development Office is programmatically responsible, issues of international cooperation in tax matters should be given distinct focus and appropriately supported. In the Division, work on public finance management should be reviewed to ensure that analytical and operational activities in this area are effectively supported. The Office of Internal Oversight Services also observed that there is still lack of clarity as to which organizational unit within the Department of Economic and Social Affairs is responsible for responding to requests for technical assistance and participation in relevant meetings in the area of taxation.

2. Core themes

13. As a result of the increased interest of Member States in public administration issues and the latest restructuring of the Division, the scope of the programme has broadened. At a formal presentation to the Committee of Experts on Public Administration in April 2003, the Division stated that the programme included 22 core themes subsumed under the following new and realigned functions: governance systems and institutions (7 themes), socio-economic governance (10 themes) and knowledge management and e-government for development (5 themes). The Division's three branches: Governance and Public Administration, Socio-Economic Governance Management, and Knowledge Management reflects the functional breakdown. The Office of Internal Oversight Services noted that there had been no attempt at prioritization among the themes.

14. An analysis of the core themes and their distribution across the three branches revealed some overlapping among the themes. For example, e-Government (under

the Knowledge Management Branch) could be considered a subtheme of Government systems (in the Governance and Public Administration Branch). Social governance and strengthening social capital (in the Socio-Economic Governance Management Branch) implies human resources links with development and training (in the Governance and Public Administration Branch). Private sector development (in the Socio-Economic Governance Management Branch) belongs to the same discussion as the changing role of the State (in the Governance and Public Administration Branch). In and by itself, overlapping and cross-cutting among themes would not pose a problem, if joint projects and teamwork across branches were an established practice in the Division. However, with the exception of two major projects which have involved broad cooperation from the staff (namely, the preparation of the *World Public Sector Report* and the Global Forum for Reinventing Government), joint projects and collaboration between branches is not the norm.

15. With only 25 Professional posts, the Division's resources are being spread thinly to cover the above-mentioned 22 themes. In November 2003, in a presentation at the departmental Directors' meeting, the Department's senior management took note of the Division's broad scope of work and recommended that it be streamlined. Some of the major partners of the Division have also noted that it is trying to cover too much ground and, as a result, faces the risk that its programme's impact and effectiveness would be diluted, a view also supported by the results of studies of the Department's technical assistance programme (see para. 39 below).

16. In conclusion, the restructuring of the Department in 2003 has had both positive and negative results for the Division. Bringing expertise and resources into the Division that were available under social development has increased the capacity of the programme to provide substantive support to national institutions responsible for realizing the Millennium Development Goals. At the same time, the restructuring had the effect of increasing the number of core themes underlying the work programme, and even with the addition of capacity from the social development area, the managers are spreading their resources thinly among the various themes. As mentioned above (para. 14), there is some thematic overlapping among the branches and the situation is not addressed through effective teamwork. Furthermore, the policy rationale for separating responsibility for domestic and international tax matters into two separate divisions was not clearly articulated and there is still some overlapping in the area of management of tax systems between the Financing for Development Office and the Division for Public Administrative and Development Management.

III. Support to intergovernmental processes

A. Support to intergovernmental bodies

17. The Division provides support to the General Assembly and the Economic and Social Council through the preparation of reports in response to specific requests. The reports prepared for the Assembly in 2002[3] and 2003[4] covered the role of public administration in the implementation of the United Nations Millennium Declaration. In support of the work of the Second Committee of the General Assembly, the Division has also organized panel discussions, for example, on challenges and

changes in public administration and on globalization and the State in 2001. As mentioned in paragraph 11 above, until 2002, the Division for Public Administration and Development Management also provided support to the Ad Hoc Group of Experts on International Cooperation in Tax Matters.

18. The Division supports the work of the Committee of Experts on Public Administration by preparing reports and conference room papers on themes selected by the Committee. This documentation presents the results of the Division's analysis. It also contains policy tools and ideas developed in the context of international conferences, expert group meetings, panels and workshops organized by the Division. For the period under review, the majority of these gatherings have focused on public administration and civil service reform, knowledge systems and e-government, governance systems and institutions. Gender has been mainstreamed in the expert group meetings and publications of the Division, particularly in the context of its work on managing diversity in the civil service.

19. In-session support provided by the Division includes oral presentations on the themes selected and provision of advice at the request of the bureau members. The Committee of Experts on Public Administration, at its second meeting in 2003, commended the presentation made by the Secretariat and expressed deep appreciation for the work and progress that had been achieved in the past year and for the coherence of the proposed future activities and for its support of the work of the Committee.[5]

B. Publications

20. The publication programme was adjusted to reflect the different reorganizations of the Division that were carried out in recent years. At the same time, this programme was slightly streamlined (from 29 titles in the biennium 2000-2001 to 24 in 2002-2003). The publication of the *World Public Sector Report*, the biennial flagship report on special themes in public administration aimed at policy makers, scholars and civil society, was launched at the initiative of the Division in 2001. The report contains basic data, country profiles, information on emerging issues and highlights of best practices. The 2001 edition was entitled "Globalization and the State". The second edition, in 2003, was entitled "E-Government at the crossroads", a theme endorsed by the Committee of Experts and prepared in collaboration with academic institutions. The report is for free distribution, with a quarter of the print run reserved for sales (total print 2,070). The Committee recognized the importance and value of the *World Public Sector Report* as a tool for policy makers and practitioners, complimented the Secretariat for the quality and relevance of the first issue and recommended that the report continue to focus on emerging topics highlighted by the Committee.[6]

21. In collaboration with the International Foundation for Election Systems and the International Institute for Democracy and Electoral Assistance, the Division has developed the electronic publication, entitled "Administration and cost of elections project". The project's web site states that it provides user-friendly, operationally oriented information on options, procedures and alternative solutions including the administrative and cost implications associated with the cost of elections. The web site (www.aceproject.org) has become a valued and well-known source of election-related information, as evidenced by the high number of monthly hits (700,000). The

usefulness of the site has been recognized in the reports of electoral institutes and centres and its content has been translated into French and Spanish with the financial support of partners.

22. Despite the success of the web site and United Nations Online Network in Public Administration and Finance (UNPAN) (see paras. 31-38 below), the Division and the staff of partner institutions commented to the Office of Internal Oversight Services that the Division's analytical products lack visibility and are not always reviewed by policy makers. The Committee of Experts also commented, in 2003 that, while significant, the initiatives of the Division in the field of public administration and governance were not sufficiently publicized throughout the world and should be the focus of a more effective public information campaign. The Office of Internal Oversight Services shares the view that the Division must improve the dissemination of information in order for it to reach its primary target audience (i.e. national policy makers).

C. Repertoire of best practices

23. The Group of Experts and its successor, the Committee of Experts, have encouraged the Division to produce repertoires and compendiums of best practices through the exchange of experiences in public administration. The Division's sources of best practices assessments include research conducted by the Division, material of experts and other organizations and reports prepared by Governments. In 2003, with a view to promoting the Division's work on best practices, the Committee suggested the creation of an inventory of administrative reform experiences that had taken place in different countries at the national and local levels in order to assess their respective effectiveness. The Division is in the process of formulating a plan to address the Committee's request.

24. The Office of Internal Oversight Services is of the view that Division efforts to prepare a repertoire of best practices in public administration is constrained by the following factors: case studies and country profiles prepared by the Division lack a standard methodology; country coverage is limited; and there is practically no synthesis of lessons learned about the core themes of the programme. It is the view of the Office of Internal Oversight Services that a repertoire of best practices should be more than a compilation of pertinent case studies, in that it also requires analytical work, critical assessment of the information obtained and synthesis, paralleling the process guiding the preparation of the *World Public Sector Report* (see para. 20 above).

D. Users and partners' feedback on the analytical activities of the Division for Public Administration and Development Management

25. The Office of Internal Oversight Services noted that the Division lacks a strategy for evaluating the usefulness of its services, including its analytical activities. Only recently did the Division prepare evaluation forms with which to assess its various activities. These were posted on the Division web site, but remained unused. The only documented evaluations were in connection with two training workshops at which participants' feedback was collected. In addition,

UNPAN gives users the option to participate in an online survey, the results of which are shared twice a year with all its members. The findings of a survey on the fifth Global Forum on Reinventing Government, conducted by the Government of Mexico in 2003, are discussed in paragraph 30 below.

26. The Office of Internal Oversight Services surveyed major partners of the Division, seeking their views on the relative impact of the services provided by the Division. The responses indicate that research and publications are perceived to have had a positive influence on strengthening policy making systems of government institutions, which is a major goal of the Division. Some of the respondents' comments suggest that they consider the analytical activities, such as documents, recommendations and expert group meetings, to be helpful in raising awareness and in creating better understanding of emerging issues. With respect to the most useful services to be provided in the future, there is an indication that organizing United Nations conferences and expert group meetings would be the most valuable service and that information provided electronically would be more valuable than printed material.

IV. Exchange of information

27. The General Assembly has placed a high priority on exchange on information on public administration. Exchange of information is pursued by the Division through (a) global forums with the participation of high-level government officials and representatives of international organizations and non-governmental organizations, as requested by the General Assembly in 2001, in resolution 56/213; and (b) a global information network.

A. High-level sharing of experiences

28. In response to the request of the General Assembly in resolution 56/213, the Division provided substantive support to the fourth Global Forum on Reinventing Government organized by the Government of Morocco in 2002 and the fifth Global Forum organized in 2003 by the Government of Mexico. The Global Forum is a periodic international conference that provides a platform for senior policy makers, experts, civil society and the private sector to exchange views and experience in areas related to governance and public sector reform.

29. The theme of the 2003 Global Forum, a four-day event attended by 8,500 participants, with delegations from 60 countries, was "quality of public service and innovation in Governments". The Division was responsible for organizing two of the seven capacity-building workshops (information and communications technology and e-government and the development of human capital in the public sector). The Forum's final declaration, intended to be followed by action by world leaders and international organizations, stressed the importance of decentralizing all aspects of governance, fiscal transparency, sound fiscal management and anti-corruption measures.

30. Based on a survey of the participants carried out by the Government of Mexico, one can conclude that it was a very successful event. Some 89 per cent of the participants expressed a strong interest in that kind of event and gave the highest

ratings to the workshops organized by the Division. The Office of Internal Oversight Services concludes that, by supporting the event, the Division is facilitating the exchange of information on emerging issues in public governance while, at the same time, contributing the United Nations perspective to those exchanges. In contrast to its publications and technical assistance projects, which tend to lack visibility, the Division's support to the Global Forum is widely known and is appreciated by public administration practitioners and policy makers.

B. Global information network on public administration

1. United Nations Online Network in Public Administration and Finance

31. The United Nations Online Network in Public Administration and Finance (UNPAN) was launched by the Division in 2001 at the request of the General Assembly. By 2003, the Network, which in 2001 included 10 online regional centres and online international centres had grown to include 18 online centres (14 regional and 4 international). The online centres are responsible for collecting, analysing and communicating information available within their own regions on issues of public administration, public economics and finance. The most active centres are the Regional Cooperation Office for City Informatization in the Asia and Pacific region and the Network of Institutes and Schools of Public Administration in Central and Eastern Europe. African online regional centres have also made significant progress in participating in UNPAN activities, but the poor quality of online connection is a significant obstacle in increasing the number of documents contributed by them, particularly in one of the African centres.

32. The Division has provided technical assistance to the online regional centres, particularly those in develo ing countries, through provision of equipment, training workshops and coaching sessions, recruitment of local consultants and help-desk services. To achieve better coordination of the Networ the Division holds yearly interregional consultative meetings of UNPAN, where progress made and future strategies are discussed with online regional centres and other interested stakeholders. The last meeting took place in 2003 back to back with the Global Forum held in Mexico. The online regional and international centres also communicate directly among each other to coordinate their activities, avoid duplication and increase the efficiency of their work. Based on a performance monitoring system, established in 2001, the Division provides monthly feedback to all UNPAN members for improving their e-knowledge management.

33. The Division has made attempts to involve the United Nations regional commissions and agencies of the United Nations system in the work of UNPAN from the very beginning, by inviting them to participate in UNPAN events and contribute documents to the Network. However, attempts at broadening the scope of collaboration among United Nations entities are facing a number of challenges, one of them being the establishment of effective working-level contacts through designation of focal points by the respective regional commissions.

2. Dissemination of material of the Division through the United Nations Online Network

34. Besides its role as manager and coordinator of the Network, the Division is a major contributor to its content by making available such material as abstracts of its

publications, conference papers, a monthly Governance World Watch newsletter, worldwide online directories of public administration and training resources, such as the manual for professional ethics in the public sector. In addition, the Division responds, directly or by referral to an online regional centre, to online requests for information and advice (approximately 2,500 requests per year). The Office of Internal Oversight Services observed that the UNPAN information management system has contributed to increase the efficiency of the Division's work. For example, UNPAN is used to manage the Division's contacts, advisory services and conference and training databases.

35. Each branch of the Division is responsible for inputting its own data in the various databases. The Office of Internal Oversight Services observed that there was varying degree of compliance among the branches to that requirement. The Division has established an Information Management Task Force to improve its representation on the Network. The Task Force provides training and support to Division staff and monitors posting and enhancing the quality of information about the Division's activities on UNPAN. Given the absence of standards and criteria for inputting in the Network assessments of best practices, it is the view of the Office of Internal Oversight Services that the Information Management Task Force should play a key role in developing these guidelines to support the work of Division staff and the online regional centres in that area (see also para. 24 above on a similar issue).

3. Assessment of the United Nations Online Network

36. The number of UNPAN document and page views exceeded 1 million in August 2003. Approximately one fourth of the users are probably government officers, of which about 10 per cent are national policy makers. The Network was selected by the World Bank to become a member of the Bank's Administrative and Civil Service Reform Virtual Network. However, the latest online survey conducted by the Division (see para. 25 above) indicates that, while 80 per cent of the users found UNPAN information useful, the majority (57 per cent) said that they had found only some, or none, of the information they needed.

37. Pursuant to the General Assembly recommendation that UNPAN be expanded, the Division's budget for the biennium 2004-2005 includes resources to strengthen such capacity by improving the management of information at the subregional level.

38. The Office of Internal Oversight Services concluded that, since its launching three years ago, UNPAN has become a valuable tool for exchanging information among its members and partners. It could become an even more effective tool if the Division were to: (a) broaden the Network through increased collaboration among its partners; and (b) further develop UNPAN demand-driven content and a more user-friendly navigation system, particularly in relation to best practices.

V. Technical assistance

39. The Division's technical assistance projects, in large part, cover the following themes: strategies for poverty eradication; social economics; social governance; governance and electoral administration; local government; and civil participation. A large proportion of projects are multisectoral. A review of a sample of project files indicates that the Division is rarely involved in the complete project cycle.

Usually, it is requested by the United Nations Development Programme (UNDP) to provide specific input into complex projects with multiple collaborators, such as advice on an aspect of policy, introduction of new tools and techniques or delivery of training courses. By the end of 2003, the Division had 362 active technical assistance projects. Of these, 58 per cent were managed by the Socio-Economic Governance Management Branch, 37 per cent by the Governance and Public Administration Branch and 4 per cent by the Knowledge Management Branch. The Office of Internal Oversight Services identified three recent technical assistance projects which were focused on gender equality and integrating gender into development policy.

A. Scope and focus of the technical assistance programme

40. In 2001 and 2002, with the support of external evaluators the Department of Economic and Social Affairs reviewed the performance of its technical assistance. The review, which included a number of Division projects, concluded that, in the context of declining resources and in order to compete effectively in a crowded arena of technical assistance providers, the Department would have to raise its profile by offering, for example, services of exceptional technical quality, or by concentrating its expertise in "niches" where few others are operating. In 2003, in their comments to the Office of Internal Oversight Services, representatives of other United Nations programmes and international organizations confirmed the relevance of this message for the Division. Other recommendations contained in the Department's assessments were that there should be a closer alignment between operational activities and the issues of concerns to the intergovernmental bodies.

41. In the 2003 report of the Secretary-General on review of technical cooperation in the United Nations[7] it was noted, in regard to public sector management, that a partial rationalization had already taken place between the Department of Economic and Social Affairs and the United Nations Development Programme, whereby the latter focused primarily on the legislature-related elements and the former focused on the public administration elements, and left open the possibility of further rationalization. In a recent internal note on this division of labour, the Division restated that its technical assistance activities would remain focused on civil service reform, decentralization, innovation, audit systems, delivery of services and information and communication technology applications. Senior management in UNDP and the Department of Economic and Social Affairs are planning to discuss ways and means to achieve a more effective division of labour and rationalization of work in 2004. The outcome of this review should be reflected in the proposals for the programme budget for the biennium 2006-2007.

B. Value of the programme

42. With respect to the value of the Division's technical assistance, the above-mentioned reviews of technical assistance (see para. 40), assessed by the Office of Internal Oversight Services as professionally competent, led to the conclusion that the Division had contributed to capacity-building in specific countries and that the high quality of its technical advisers and consultants was its best asset. In providing advice in the information and communication technology area, the Division's value added was judged to be its objectivity and its linkage to

global information networks. On the negative side, the studies found that administrative problems affected the delivery of services by the Department of Economic and Social Affairs and that UNDP, which had been developing its own capacity in the governance area was found by country offices to be more responsive. A 2002 Office of Internal Oversight Services audit found that the Division's implementation rate for technical cooperation projects was below the overall average rate of the Department. In 2003, several responses from one recipient country included in the Office of Internal Oversight Services survey of recipients of the Division's technical assistance, also referred to problems faced by the Division in delivering assistance (e.g. delays in processing authorization, poor project design and lack of monitoring and follow-up).

43. With regard to the question of which organization providing assistance in public administration and development was the most useful, the respondents to the Office of Internal Oversight Services survey of recipients of technical assistance did not indicate a clear preference for the Division. Other organizations surveyed by the Office of Internal Oversight Services on the work of the Division, ranked its technical assistance fourth for usefulness, after exchange of information, support to international conference and publications. Regarding future usefulness of the Division's activities, recipients of its technical assistance commented that activities in the future that would contribute to strengthening the capacity of institutions and that supporting the development of concepts and tools would be the most useful.

44. The Division is aware of the need to reorient its technical assistance programme and has tried to do so by focusing more on support to policy development and capacity-building. It is too early to assess the results of this reorientation.

C. Patterns of expenditure

45. The technical assistance programme of the Division relies on two sources of funds: the United Nations regular programme of technical assistance, section 21 of the programme budget, and extrabudgetary funds. Section 21 expenditures cover the salaries of the Division's interregional advisers. Extrabudgetary resources, which fund the implementation of activities, have declined by 40 per cent since 1994, from $21 million at the end of 1994, to $12.8 million in October 2003. The reduction in extrabudgetary funds would have been even larger, had there not been a substantial increase (over 70 per cent) in trust funds from 1994 to 2002. Despite this overall decrease, the Division is the largest of the technical assistance programmes of the Department of Economic and Social Affairs, with 38 per cent of the Department's extrabudgetary resources in 2001. However, for the Division's technical assistance to remain sustainable, it must diversify its extrabudgetary funding base.

46. Evidence that the programme has begun this diversification is illustrated by the increase in trust fund resources. In 2003, the Socio-Economic Governance Management Branch of the Division developed a plan to diversify its sources of funding by developing networks and contacts with the World Bank, regional development banks and foundations and through bilateral cooperation.

D. Synergy between the normative, analytical and operational functions of the Division

47. The underlying concept of the 1997 restructuring of the Department of Economic and Social Affairs was that integrating normative and analytical functions and technical cooperation activities would rationalize economic and social activities throughout the Secretariat and create synergies. An Office of Internal Oversight Services inspection of the Department in 2001 had found that the integration of normative, analytical and operational functions was well under way.[8]

48. In the case of the Division for Public Administration and Development Management, the following example illustrates how the normative, analytical and operational dimensions have interacted, sometimes in unanticipated ways. In the context of its mandate to support developing countries and countries with economies in transition in strengthening civil service reform, the Division provided support to the Second Pan-African Conference of Ministers of the Civil Service, held in Rabat in 1998, and to the drafting committee of the Conference. In its declaration, the Conference recommended the creation of a Charter for the Public Service function in Africa. In parallel, the Division had conducted an analytical study funded by UNDP, on public service and ethics in Africa, which revealed a gap between standards at the policy level and practical implementation of those standards. The results of the study were shared with the drafting committee, which used them in its work. The Charter for the Public Service in Africa was adopted by 38 African countries at the Third Biennial Pan-African Conference, held in Windhoek in 2001.[9] Subsequently, the Division's study served as the basis for workshops and training modules for promoting professionalism and ethics in Africa, in which linkages were made with the civil service charter. These interactions should be pursued more systematically in the future.

49. The establishment of such linkages and synergies will be further facilitated as country technical assistance projects become more focused on providing assistance in the development and formulation of policies and strategies referred to as upstream assistance. Such assistance could be provided to Governments in support of an integrated reform of the public sector, government decentralization, or to develop analytical tools for monitoring the implementation of the Millennium Development Goals. The Office of Internal Oversight Services noted that the Division intends to consider linkages among the three types of functions (normative, analytical and technical assistance) as a key criterion for the selection of technical assistance projects.

50. Division staff stated to the Office of Internal Oversight Services that synergies between functions and across the different themes that the Division handles could be increased if management took the following steps: (a) make cross-linkages among functions and themes a programming priority; (b) formulate products and outputs which draw from its different functions; and (c) organize teams with the proper mix of skills to support these cross-dimensional products.

VI. Collaboration

51. At its fifty-sixth session, as a follow-up to the five-year assessment of the implementation of its resolution 50/225 on public administration and development,

the General Assembly, in resolution 56/213, requested the Secretary-General to improve the coordination of technical assistance in the field of public administration and development. In 2003, the core functions of the restructured Division for Public Administration and Development Management included ensuring effective cooperation with the relevant organizations and institutions inside and outside the United Nations system.

A. Collaboration among entities of the United Nations system

52. The Division is the focal point for reporting to the Committee of Experts on Public Administration, the Economic and Social Council and the General Assembly on the public administration activities of all United Nations system entities. In late 1999, a partnership agreement between UNDP and the Department of Economic and Social Affairs was concluded in the area of governance and public sector management (see para. 41 above). Staff of the Division and UNDP stated to the Office of Internal Oversight Services that, in general, positive working relationships existed between the two entities. However, it appears that coordination with UNDP at the regional and country level could be improved. One of the issues mentioned by staff interviewed was that UNDP resident representatives were not always informed about the capacity of the Division to provide services and alternative sources of funding available to it.

53. Since 2002, the Division has organized inter-agency meetings with the representatives of United Nations entities that participate in meetings of the Committee of Experts. In 2003, the coordinating meeting was attended by 24 representatives from, inter alia, the Economic Commission for Africa (ECA), the Economic Commission for Europe (ECE), UNDP, the United Nations Human Settlements Programme (UN-Habitat), the International Labour Organization, the Food and Agriculture Organization of the United Nations, the United Nations Educational, Scientific and Cultural Organization and the United Nations Industrial Development Organization. The participants discussed potential collaboration between the Division, UNDP, the World Bank, regional development banks and the regional commissions. A joint report exploring future collaboration was issued by the Division, UNDP and ECA. While this joint planning exercise is a step in the right direction, it did not specify which activities would be jointly undertaken. The Office of Internal Oversight Services believes that inter-agency meetings could be made a more effective mechanism of collaboration among United Nations entities involved in the area of public administration, by encouraging greater information-sharing and exploring additional areas of cooperation, based on the individual entities' mandates and expertise.

54. Collaboration between the Division and United Nations entities and other organizations takes place in the course of project implementation. While the Division's input into each project is limited (see para. 39 above), this arrangement multiplies the opportunities for collaboration. The following are recent examples of collaboration among organizations: (a) developing capacity-building workshops for conflict management, with UNDP, the Division for the Advancement of Women of the Department of Economic and Social Affairs and the Department for Disarmament Affairs; (b) providing support to a workshop on cross-border cooperation among local authorities for poverty reduction, with the co-organizers (UNDP, ECA) of the fifth Africa Governance Forum. A partner of the Division

expressed the view that there should be greater collaboration between the Division and other United Nations entities for increased attention to the role of local governments in public administration.

B. Coordination of development assistance

55. With respect to aid coordination, the Office of Internal Oversight Services noted two cases where the Division has exercised a leading role: (a) it is the implementer of the Africa Governance Inventory project, a database which describes governance initiatives implemented in sub-Saharan Africa. The database was designed to improve coordination of development assistance; (b) as a side event to the fifth Global Forum on Reinventing Government, held in November 2003, the Division organized an ad hoc expert group meeting on innovations in the sourcing and effective delivery of aid, as well as in aid coordination, management and accountability. Some of the participants stated to the Office of Internal Oversight Services that the scope of the meeting was too broad and that, with respect to follow-up of the discussions, the respective roles of the Department of Economic and Social Affairs and UNDP were not entirely clear to them.

56. In conclusion, while the Division has taken steps to define its areas of activities so as to reduce overlap with other United Nations entities, the Office of Internal Oversight Services believes that there is still room for further rationalization of the division of labour between the Division for Public Administration and Development Management, the regional commissions, UNDP and other entities of the United Nations system. This rationalization should help the Division to prioritize its activities and focus on a few critical areas where it can have greater impact.

VII. Conclusions and recommendations

57. **Since its inception in 1948, the programme on public administration, finance and development has grown into a comprehensive set of activities which reflect the evolving agenda of the General Assembly and the Economic and Social Council. In recent years the programme's link to the Assembly and the Council has become more formalized and strengthened through the establishment of a standing Committee of Experts on Public Administration. The programme's main value lies in its support to the intergovernmental debate on matters of public governance as a means to achieve development goals and in its coordinating role in promoting the global exchange of experience on national public administration practices. In 2003, the programme received additional capacity and can now address a broader range of issues related to public governance, including substantive support to national institutions in the socio and economic governance areas. The Office of Internal Oversight Services found evidence of synergies between the operational, analytical and normative activities of the programme.**

58. **Based on the findings presented in the present report, the Office of Internal Oversight Services is of the view that the Division obtained the following results with respect to its results-based budgeting framework expected accomplishments for the biennium 2002-2003 (see para. 9):**

(a) ***Broader and deeper understanding of major issues of public administration.*** **The Committee of Experts has expressed satisfaction at the substantive support provided to it by the Division for Public Administration and Development Management. In this context, the analytical activities of the programme have been helpful in raising the awareness of Governments and creating a better understanding of emerging issues. The quality and relevance of the programme's flagship publication, the *World Public Sector Report*, has been recognized by the Committee of Experts. Through its substantive and material support to the 2002 and 2003 Global Forums on Reinventing Government, the programme has reached out to a larger public of policy makers and practitioners;**

(b) ***Improved access to data and information.*** **One of the programme's major achievements is the establishment of a global electronic network, the United Nations Online Network in Public Administration and Finance (UNPAN) for exchanging experience on practices in public administration, which is viewed as a valuable tool by UNPAN members and users. Access to quality information and advice was also provided through technical assistance and the programme has contributed to capacity-building in recipient countries;**

(c) ***Improved coordination.*** **The Division organized annual inter-agency meetings and took steps to rationalize the division of labour between itself and its major partners; the agreement concluded with UNDP in the late 1990s to set up the terms of reference for a strategic partnership was further discussed; in addition, the Division identified areas of collaboration with one of the regional commissions, namely, the Economic Commission for Africa.**

59. **Despite the main accomplishments mentioned in paragraph 58 above, to improve its effectiveness, the programme needs to address the following issues. It should be noted that the present evaluation reviewed all aspects of the programme, not all of which could be tracked through the results-based budgeting framework for the biennium 2002-2003:**

(a) **The programme has to address 20 core themes covering the areas of public administration, socio-economic governance and knowledge management. One of the consequences of this broad scope is that the programme is spread thinly among too many themes. The Office of Internal Oversight Services also noted that there was some overlapping among core themes assigned to different Division branches. By itself, this situation would not present a problem if there were greater use of joint projects and teamwork by managers around the critical issues addressed by the programme;**

(b) **With the exception of its support of the Global Forum, the programme's outputs and products lack visibility and recognition. The Division's outreach strategy has relied primarily on UNPAN, which has limited outreach to national policy makers;**

(c) **The 2003 restructuring of the Department of Economic and Social Affairs led, inter alia, to the separation of functions related to taxation, assigned to its Financing for Development Office and public finance management assigned to the Division for Public Administration and Development Management. The Office of Internal Oversight Services believes that, under this distribution of responsibilities, within the broader concept of**

financing for development, issues of international cooperation in tax matters should be given appropriate focus and provided with sufficient capacity, while the work on public finance management in the Division is provided with adequate support;

(d) The Division has taken steps to develop a repertoire of best practices in public administration, considered a priority by the Committee of Experts, by collecting case studies and country profiles from a variety of sources, and posting them on the Network. However, the process for assessing best practices lacks a standard methodology, country coverage is very limited and the ability to search for "best practices" and related subthemes though UNPAN is difficult;

(e) UNPAN faces the following difficulties: (i) it reaches only a small proportion of its intended primary users, i.e. national policy makers; (ii) the lack of working-level contacts with the Economic and Social Commission for Asia and the Pacific and some related United Nations entities does not promote collaboration; (iii) a substantial proportion of users feel that more information could be provided. The above-mentioned issues need to be addressed in order for the Network to grow and maximize its usefulness as a tool for developing and exchanging knowledge and information;

(f) The Division has contributed specific but modest inputs to a large number of complex technical assistance projects involving multiple partners. As was noted in paragraph 58 (b) above regarding the outputs of the programme in general, the Division's contribution to these projects appear to lack recognition and visibility among its partners and users. The effort at rationalization mentioned in paragraph 58 (c) above should lead to a sharper definition of the programme and enable it to have an impact.

60. **Based on these findings, the Office of Internal Oversight Services makes the following recommendations:**

Recommendation 1
Rationalizing the scope and focus of the Division

61. **Given its existing capacity, within the broad theme of strengthening governance systems and institutions for social development and poverty reduction, the Division for Public Administration and Development Management should identify a few critical areas where it can have an impact. This process should be based on the following criteria: (a) the Division's comparative advantage vis-à-vis other United Nations entities taking into account their respective mandates and substantive expertise; (b) an analysis of Member States' specific clients groups that would benefit from the advisory and technical assistance services provided by the Division; and (c) a review of the relative usefulness of products and services based on existing assessments. This process should be concluded by the end of 2004 in order for these areas of focus to be reflected in the proposed programme budget for the biennium 2006-2007 (see paras. 15, 16, 22, 25, 40, 42 and 44 above).**

Recommendation 2
Support to international cooperation in tax matters in the Financing for Development Office

62. **The Department of Economic and Social Affairs should ensure that the work on international cooperation in tax matters and support to Governments in this area are given appropriate focus and support within the Financing for Development Office (see paras. 11 and 12 above).**

Recommendation 3
Support to public finance management work in the Division

63. **The Division should allocate adequate resources to work in public finance management to allow for a more effective delivery of analytical and operational outputs in that area (see paras. 11 and 12 above).**

Recommendation 4
Enhancing the repertoire of best practices

64. **Given the importance attached by the Committee of Experts on Public Administration to best practices, the Division should develop standard methodologies for identifying and compiling best practices in public administration (see paras. 23, 24 and 35 above).**

Recommendation 5
Developing an information strategy

65. **The Division should develop an information strategy to publicize more effectively its initiatives on public administration. The primary target of this strategy should be national policy makers. Part of the strategy should be to develop a worldwide database of national policy makers who would be interested in the Division's outputs. The strategy should also identify potential users in such groups as international organizations (see paras. 22, 36 and 43 above).**

Recommendation 6
Enhancing the United Nations Online Network in Public Administration and Finance

66. (a) **The Division and the Economic and Social Commission for Asia and the Pacific should take effective steps in establishing working-level contacts to serve as a focal point to input information related to public administration in UNPAN system;**

(b) **UNPAN demand-driven content should be further developed, particularly in relation to best practices;**

(c) **Information management, including inputting data in the UNPAN database and regularly using the resources offered by UNPAN, should be better integrated in the work of all branches of the Division, at all levels (see paras. 31-38 above).**

Recommendation 7
Enhancing linkages and synergies between functions and across themes

67. **To increase synergies between the functions and across the various themes handled by the Division, management should take the following steps: (a) make cross-linkages between functions and themes a programming priority; (b) formulate products and outputs which would draw from the Division different functions; and (c) organize teams with the proper mix of skills to support these cross-dimensional products (see paras. 47-50 above).**

Recommendation 8
Strengthening collaboration among United Nations entities

68. **The annual inter-agency meetings on public administration, finance and development should be made a more effective mechanism of collaboration among United Nations entities involved in the area of public administration, by inter alia, encouraging greater information-sharing and exploring additional areas of cooperation, based on the individual entities' mandates and expertise.**

(*Signed*) Dileep **Nair**
Under-Secretary-General for Internal Oversight Services

Notes

[1] See *Official Records of the General Assembly, Fifty-seventh Session, Supplement No. 16* (A/57/16), para. 259.

[2] Ibid., *Fifty-fifth Session, Supplement No. 6* (A/55/6/Rev.1), para. 7.36.

[3] A/57/262-E/2002/82.

[4] A/58/152.

[5] See *Official Records of the Economic and Social Council, 2003, Supplement No. 44* (E/2003/44-E/C.16/2003/6), para. 32.

[6] Ibid., para. 36, recommendation 3.

[7] See A/58/382, appendix G.

[8] See A/55/750, para. 55.

[9] See A/56/63-E/2001/21, annex II.

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Programme questions: evaluation

Triennial review of the implementation of the recommendations made by the Committee for Programme and Coordination at its forty-first session on the in-depth evaluation of sustainable development

Note by the Secretary-General**

In conformity with General Assembly resolution 48/218 B of 29 July 1994 and 54/244 of 23 December 1999, the Secretary-General has the honour to transmit herewith the report of the Office of Internal Oversight Services, on the triennial review of the implementation of the recommendations made by the Committee for Programme and Coordination at its forty-first session on the in-depth evaluation of sustainable development. The report has been reviewed by the relevant departments and offices. The Secretary-General takes note of its findings and concurs with its recommendations.

* E/AC.51/2004/1.

** Submission of the present report was delayed in order to review comments received from users of services of the Department of Economic and Social Affairs.

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Annex

Triennial review of the implementation of the recommendations made by the Committee for Programme and Coordination at its forty-first session on the in-depth evaluation of sustainable development

Summary

The present report is submitted in accordance with the decision taken by the Committee for Programme and Coordination at its twenty-second session to review the implementation of its recommendations three years after taking decisions on an in-depth evaluation.

This triennial review concludes that the Division for Sustainable Development in the Department of Economic and Social Affairs has implemented or taken adequate measures towards implementing the Committee's recommendations on the evaluation of sustainable development. As a result of action taken since the evaluation done in 2001, positive changes, such as the Division's efforts to strengthen its partnerships with other United Nations agencies and to improve access to information, have already been noted. Furthermore, the results of a survey conducted by the Office of Internal Oversight Services illustrate that other United Nations agencies and major groups of Agenda 21 are satisfied with many of the initiatives recently undertaken by the Division.

Over the past three years, several steps have been taken to strengthen intergovernmental processes for sustainable development. The 2003 Secretary-General's follow-up report on the World Summit on Sustainable Development presents proposals for strengthening the intergovernmental review process for the implementation of Agenda 21 and defines the roles of different United Nations entities and other international institutions in sustainable development. Furthermore, steps have also been taken to strengthen inter-agency processes. In particular, the Division for Sustainable Development has worked more closely with other United Nations agencies, as exemplified by its partnership with the United Nations Environment Programme in preparing for the International Expert Meeting on the 10-year Framework of Programmes for Sustainable Consumption and Production, held in Marrakesh, Morocco, in June 2003.

Regarding reporting for sustainable development, a number of initiatives have been taken to improve the processes for obtaining and reporting information. The Division for Sustainable Development has been actively engaged over the past three years in preparing policy analyses for various aspects of sustainable development. Further, reporting to the Commission on Sustainable Development has been streamlined with the issuance of more reports as background papers; the Division has also streamlined national reporting by assessing and coordinating its national reporting requirements with other United Nations agencies. Regarding access to information on sustainable development, the enhancement of the Division's web site, its quarterly Commission on Sustainable Development newsletters, and its ongoing partnership with the Department of Public Information have all served to increase access by both government representatives and the public.

The Division for Sustainable Development has actively sought to improve the quality of information on sustainable development by incorporating perspectives from regions, major groups of Agenda 21, and other relevant sources. Specifically, the Division was more proactively engaged with the regional commissions while preparing for the World Summit on Sustainable Development and continues to work with them in its preparations for the twelfth session of the Commission on Sustainable Development, to be held in 2004. The Division for Sustainable Development also maintains regular contact with and obtains feedback from major groups. Lastly, the Division is making greater use of more diversified sources of information from other United Nations agencies, such as the World Health Organization, as well as from the scientific and business communities.

The Division has also successfully provided support to sustainable development at the country level. Through its regional and global meetings, it has facilitated the exchange of national experiences and it has developed and shared guidelines for national sustainable development strategies. Further, the Division provides technical assistance and advisory services to developing countries and countries with economies in transition on a demand-driven basis, identifying needs, formulating and executing projects and through responding to critical situations.

While positive impact has been noted with the implementation of the recommendations of the Committee for Programme and Coordination, several issues continue to require attention. These include the continuing dissemination of the concept of sustainable development (incorporating its three social, economic and environmental pillars and its emphasis on integration), continued efforts to streamline national reporting, further facilitation and support of national Governments' monitoring of their sustainable development strategies and strengthening of the Division's technical cooperation programme.

Contents

		Paragraphs	*Page*
I.	Introduction	1–4	5
II.	Findings	5–43	5
	A. Intergovernmental processes for sustainable development	5–8	5
	B. Information and reporting on sustainable development	9–28	7
	C. Inter-agency coordination on sustainable development	29–31	13
	D. Support to sustainable development programmes	32–43	14
III.	Conclusion	44–49	18

I. Introduction

1. At its forty-first session, in 2001, the Committee for Programme and Coordination considered the report of the Office of Internal Oversight Services on the in-depth evaluation of sustainable development (E/AC.51/2001/2). The Committee endorsed all ten recommendations contained in the evaluation report.[1]

2. The present report contains the findings of the triennial review conducted to determine the extent to which the Committee's recommendations made three years ago have been implemented. The status of the ten recommendations is discussed in section II below, under the following four headings: (a) intergovernmental processes for sustainable development; (b) information and reporting on sustainable development; (c) inter-agency coordination on sustainable development; and (d) support to sustainable development programmes. The present report also reflects new developments in sustainable development as they pertain to the implementation and outcomes of the recommendations. No new issues were identified during the review.

3. The subprogramme on sustainable development, established in 1992 after the United Nations Conference on Environment and Development, is implemented by the Division for Sustainable Development of the Department of Economic and Social Affairs. The Division provides coordinated support for the implementation of Agenda 21,[2] the Programme for the Further Implementation of Agenda 21[3] and the Johannesburg Plan of Implementation,[4] as well as the Programme of Action for the Sustainable Development of Small Island Developing States,[5] and other outcomes of the United Nations Conference on Environment and Development, including the work programmes and decisions adopted by the Commission on Sustainable Development.

4. This triennial review is based on the following four methods: (a) the information provided by the Division for Sustainable Development on progress made in implementing the recommendations of the Committee for Programme and Coordination, a process which is monitored twice a year by the Office of Internal Oversight Services; (b) a review in early 2004 of the relevant documents obtained from the Division; (c) consultations in early 2004 with staff of the Division; and (d) a survey done in late 2003 of 19 respondents from different United Nations agencies and major groups of Agenda 21 concerned with sustainable development. A draft of the report was made available to the Department of Economic and Social Affairs for review. Their comments are identified in the present report by the use of italics.

II. Findings

A. Intergovernmental processes for sustainable development

Recommendation 1
Facilitating intergovernmental processes

In collaboration with the members of the organizations of the Administrative Committee for Coordination, the Department of Economic and Social Affairs should identify intergovernmental processes at the global and regional levels where

insufficient attention has been given to the social, economic and environmental aspects of sustainable development. As a result of this initiative, the Division for Sustainable Development should, by the end of 2002, present proposals to the Bureau of the Commission on Sustainable Development to organize focused consultations between Government representatives engaged in other intergovernmental processes and members of the Commission and its Bureau.

5. Several conferences and initiatives over the past three years have contributed to the enhancement of intergovernmental processes. Most significantly, the World Summit on Sustainable Development, held in Johannesburg, South Africa, in August and September 2002, resulted in new partnership initiatives by and between Governments, civil society and business. Further, the Plan of Implementation of the Summit addresses intergovernmental processes where insufficient attention has been given to sustainable development by specifically delineating the respective roles of the General Assembly, the Economic and Social Council, the Commission on Sustainable Development and other international and regional institutions. The Plan specifically states that the Commission should be the high-level commission on sustainable development within the United Nations system and should promote and facilitate partnerships involving Governments, international organizations and relevant stakeholders.

6. The report of the Secretary-General on follow-up to the World Summit on Sustainable Development and the future role of the Commission on Sustainable Development: the implementation track,[6] which was prepared for the eleventh session of the Commission, presents proposals for strengthening the intergovernmental review process. In particular, in the report, it is stressed that the future programme of the Commission should consider the need to complement and not duplicate the work of other intergovernmental forums. The report also discusses the greater integration of the economic, social and environmental dimensions of sustainable development and the strengthening of the institutional framework for sustainable development.

7. The Commission concluded its eleventh session in May 2003 with an agreement on its future programme and organization of work up to the year 2017. The Commission now functions on a two-year cycle that includes review years and policy years. The review year evaluates progress made in implementing sustainable development goals, as well as identifying obstacles and constraints; it begins with regional implementation meetings that will contribute to the review session of the cycle. The Commission's work during the review session will be supported by the Secretary-General's state of implementation reports. The policy year decides on concrete measures to facilitate implementation; it will be preceded by an intergovernmental preparatory meeting in February or March (two months prior to the session of the Commission) to discuss policy options and possible actions to address the constraints and obstacles in the process of implementation identified during the review year.

8. The Office of Internal Oversight Services believes there is sufficient evidence to conclude that recommendation 1 was implemented.

B. Information and reporting on sustainable development

Recommendation 2
Enhancing the understanding of sustainable development

(a) Policy summaries. The Division for Sustainable Development should, based on the work done in different parts of the United Nations system, prepare by the end of 2001, summaries of the main policy aspects of poverty, and consumption and production patterns — the two overriding issues of sustainable development identified in the programme of work of the Commission on Sustainable Development for the period 1998-2002 — as they relate to the different chapters of Agenda 21. These summaries should serve as the basis for discussions, initiated in the course of 2002, with secretariat units in other sectors of the United Nations, to integrate better the social, economic and environmental aspects of sustainable development. In the future, additional summaries should be prepared for such other issues as health and gender, as needed.

(b) Key characteristics of sustainable development programmes. The organizations members of the Inter-Agency Committee on Sustainable Development should articulate, by the end of 2002, a set of key characteristics of sustainable development programmes that would promote a common understanding of the concept of sustainable development and its implications for policy decisions. Based on analysis of country experiences in implementing sustainable development programmes, the set of key characteristics should be formulated in terms that facilitate adaptation to country-specific conditions.

9. The Division for Sustainable Development has been actively engaged over the past three years in preparing policy analyses for various aspects of sustainable development. As part of the preparatory processes for the World Summit, the Division prepared policy reports on combating poverty and on changing consumption patterns in March 2001. The reports discuss trends, current issues and challenges for the future. In the assessment of the Office of Internal Oversight Services, these papers present a balanced appraisal of the main policy aspects of poverty and consumption and production patterns and how these issues fit into the wider context of sustainable development. However, they do not contain an identification of the roles that should be played by United Nations agencies to better implement Agenda 21. Further, as part of the follow-up to the Summit, the Division prepared a survey of international activities on consumption and production patterns.

10. The Office of Internal Oversight Services was informed that the Division continues to work consistently with other United Nations agencies to ensure that all issues of sustainable development are covered. A recent example of this was the International Expert Meeting on the 10-year Framework of Programmes for Sustainable Consumption and Production, held in Marrakesh, Morocco, from 16 to 19 June 2003, which was organized by the Division in collaboration with the United Nations Environment Programme (UNEP). Over 100 participants from approximately 70 countries attended the meeting to develop a ten-year framework of programmes for sustainable development and production. Participants in the meeting included representatives from government agencies, international organizations, industry groups, non-governmental organizations and academia.

11. Although the Inter-Agency Committee on Sustainable Development was abolished by the former Administrative Committee on Coordination (now the United Nations System Chief Executives Board for Coordination) in 2000, progress has been made over the past three years in developing agreed-upon key characteristics of national sustainable development strategies. The International Forum on National Sustainable Development Strategies, held in Accra, from 7 to 9 November 2001, examined, among other things, national experiences in developing national sustainable development strategies. Following that conference, the Division for Sustainable Development issued two volumes that summarized the meeting and provided guidance on how to prepare a national sustainable development strategy.

12. Despite the efforts discussed above, however, the results of the Office of Internal Oversight Services survey indicate that there is still no common understanding of the concept of "sustainable development" among governing and policy-making bodies. A majority of respondents (15 out of 19) did not believe that such a common understanding currently exists. While many of these respondents stated that there was greater awareness of the concept of sustainable development, some said it was still widely regarded as an environmental issue. *The Department stated that this misperception was likely due to an inadequate understanding of the three [social, economic and environmental] pillars of sustainable development. To speed up progress in sustainable development, the General Assembly, by its resolution 57/253 of 20 December 2002, decided to adopt sustainable development as a key element of the overarching framework for United Nations activities, in particular for achieving the internationally agreed development goals, including those contained in the United Nations Millennium Declaration.* In resolution 57/253, the General Assembly reaffirmed the need to ensure a balance between economic development, social development and environmental protection as interdependent and mutually reinforcing pillars of sustainable development.

13. The Office of Internal Oversight Services believes that the Division has made meaningful efforts to implement recommendation 2. However, more attention should be given to achieving a more common understanding of sustainable development and to further discussion of the roles played by United Nations agencies to better implement Agenda 21.

Recommendation 3
Streamlining reporting

(a) Reporting to the Commission on Sustainable Development. Under guidance of the Commission on Sustainable Development and its Bureau, the Division for Sustainable Development should enter into consultation with the members of the Inter-Agency Committee on Sustainable Development, so that the reports issued before the sessions of the Commission focus on key elements to be addressed at the upcoming session. Other required information, of general or technical nature, should be issued at regular intervals during the intersessional period.

(b) National reporting.

(i) The Division for Sustainable Development should ask the members of the Inter-Agency Committee on Sustainable Development and the regional commissions to identify existing national reporting and data-collection

activities that would provide the non-restricted information required by the Commission on Sustainable Development;

(ii) The Division should review the potential of the common country assessment to support the reporting needs of the Commission for national information and make proposals for consideration by the Commission before the end of its tenth session, in 2002;

(iii) Under the guidance of the Commission and its Bureau, the Division should limit its requests for national information to information not readily available elsewhere in the United Nations system.

14. As the secretariat of the Commission on Sustainable Development, the Division solicits, collects and analyses national reports that are relevant to the work programme of the Commission. In this capacity, the Division has undertaken several initiatives to streamline requests for national reporting. For example, in February 2002, it organized a meeting of national focal points to discuss proposals for improving and facilitating national reporting. The results of the meeting were made available at the World Summit. With regard to preparations for the Summit, members of the former Inter-Agency Committee on Sustainable Development agreed to issue reports on key issues to be discussed at the Summit as background papers during the four sessions of the Commission functioning as the Preparatory Committee for the Summit. In total, 31 documents were issued as background papers for the second, third and fourth Summit Preparatory Committee meetings.

15. After the abolishment of the Inter-Agency Committee, the Division continued to ensure inter-agency coordination. For example, it conducted an analysis of United Nations national reporting requests to determine where both overlapping and gaps for information exist, which included an examination of the common country assessment in the context of the reporting needs of the Commission. The results of the analysis were presented at the eleventh session of the Commission, in May 2003, and are summarized in a matrix in the Division's background paper No. 3, entitled "Note by the secretariat on national reporting to the Commission on Sustainable Development".[7] In the paper, it is specifically stated that a number of national Governments have indicated that the availability of such a matrix could facilitate their preparation of national information strategies to address the challenge of preparing and consolidating inputs from inside as well as outside their government administrations for reporting to the United Nations system. In the assessment of the Office of Internal Oversight Services, the matrix provides a comprehensive and useful framework for outlining current United Nations national reporting requests. It analyses specific reporting requests by, among other variables, publication, issues covered, lead organization, national focal point, periodicity and methodology.

16. The Office of Internal Oversight Services was informed that the Division continued to make a concerted effort to ask only for national reporting on data that was not readily available elsewhere in the United Nations system. The Division is working with national focal points and other partners to develop formalized procedures and mechanisms to enhance harmonization and avoid duplications. However, this approach must ensure that the Commission obtains all of the information and data it requires. The above-mentioned background paper specifically stresses the need for consistent coordinated monitoring and reporting of national and regional level information related to the implementation of the outcomes of the World Summit on Sustainable Development, Agenda 21 and other

relevant conference outcomes. Further, in a recent note on preparations for the twelfth session of the Commission, the Division noted that, with a view to trying to reduce the reporting burden on countries, the secretariat of the Commission had been undertaking action on several fronts. No new surveys or information requests had been specifically generated for the process of preparing for the Commission's twelfth session, but rather, countries had been asked to provide updates for their national reports for the session based on existing information.

17. The initiatives discussed above appear to have had a positive impact on streamlining reporting. Nevertheless, the results of the Office of Internal Oversight Services survey indicate that more work may be needed to further streamline reporting. Nearly half of the survey's respondents (9 out of 19 respondents) did not believe that the work of national Governments to prepare national reports to the Commission on Sustainable Development had been streamlined. Most of the respondents said that greater coordination was needed between different ministries at the national level; some respondents believed that the Division should develop more concise indicators, along with increased guidance on how to use them for national reporting. Further, while 9 out of 19 respondents believed that about the right number of documents was submitted to the Commission, 6 out of 19 said that too many documents were still being submitted.

18. While the Office of Internal Oversight Services believes that there is sufficient evidence to conclude that recommendation 3 has been implemented, the Division for Sustainable Development should be encouraged to continue its efforts to streamline national reporting.

Recommendation 4
Quality of information

(a) Regional perspectives

(i) The Division for Sustainable Development should ensure that the reports prepared for the Commission on Sustainable Development or other related intergovernmental processes integrate different regional perspectives through a process of consultations with the regional offices of United Nations organizations, the regional commissions and relevant regional and subregional organizations. Consultations should be initiated at the planning stage of reporting, giving adequate attention to the critical and unresolved issues that require additional study at the regional level;

(ii) The Division should review the capacity of regional and subregional organizations to participate in the work envisaged in subparagraph (i) above and bring to the attention of relevant bodies problems that may exist where capacity is insufficient.

(b) Diversified sources of information. The Division for Sustainable Development should ensure that the members of the Inter-Agency Committee on Sustainable Development who are consolidating information for reporting to the Commission on Sustainable Development are in a position to use diversified sources of information, geographically and by sectors of activity, including contributions of the scientific community, social groups and business and industry groups, as recommended by the General Assembly in paragraph 133 (e) of the annex to its resolution S-19/2 of 28 June 1997;

(c) Calendar. For the preparation of reports, the Division for Sustainable Development should propose a calendar that provides sufficient lead time for adequate consultations at each stage of the process.

19. The Division has worked towards improving the quality of information on sustainable development by increasingly incorporating regional perspectives. First, in cooperation with the regional commissions and UNEP, the Division organized regional and subregional meetings and round tables between August and November 2001, as part of preparations for the World Summit on Sustainable Development. Furthermore, the three regional reports on Agenda 21 produced by the Division from 1998 to 2000 were used at the Summit. The Division is also continuing to work with the regional commissions as it prepares for the twelfth session of the Commission, to be held in April of 2004. In particular, a series of regional implementation meetings were held between October 2003 and January 2004. The format of the review session of the Commission will include regional sessions for each of the United Nations regions. In particular, the Office of Internal Oversight Services was told that the regional reports issued by the regional commissions presenting perspectives from the different regions had been very valuable. Further, the Division prepares forecasts of all documentation needed for the Commission. For example, in its preparation for the twelfth session of the Commission, the Division's internal deadline for completion of the Secretary-General's reports was the end of December 2003.

20. In the past three years, the Division has also made a strong effort to incorporate more diversified sources of information in preparing its papers and reports. It broadened its data sources by incorporating information from other United Nations agencies, the scientific and business communities and non-government organizations. In particular, it is attempting to make full use of information from within the United Nations system by utilizing reports prepared by the United Nations Children's Fund, the World Health Organization, the World Bank and the International Monetary Fund. Staff of the Division are also making greater use of information from universities, the Organisation for Economic Cooperation and Development and professional journals.

21. This greater use of more diversified sources of data must be seen within the wider context of bringing a more analytical perspective into the work of the Division. In particular, the Division's Policy Integration and Analysis Branch fosters more cross-branch collaboration by providing analytical inputs into the work of the entire Division. It looks at trends and analyses their underlying causes and identifies emerging issues and flags them for the attention of Member States.

22. The positive results of the Division's efforts to enhance the quality of information on sustainable development can be seen in the responses received to the Office of Internal Oversight Services survey. First, 15 out of 19 respondents stated that regional involvement in sustainable development efforts had increased over the past three years. In addition, 17 out of 19 respondents said that, overall, documents submitted by the Secretariat offered a balanced presentation of different perspectives. Further, 12 of the 19 respondents rated the overall quality of the documents as "good".

23. The Office of Internal Oversight Services believes there is sufficient evidence to conclude that recommendation 4 was implemented.

Recommendation 5
Facilitating access to information

(a) Access by government representatives. To facilitate government representatives' continuous access to information, the Division for Sustainable Development should take the following initiatives:

(i) Notify government representatives of the Division's contact persons for the different items on the agenda of the Commission on Sustainable Development by the end of 2001;

(ii) Provide a summary of each report in accordance with the six-week rule and organize Secretariat briefings on key reports, highlighting policy implications of analyses presented and clarifying technical concepts in the course of 2002;

(iii) Facilitate access to information on new developments and informal exchange of information through the means of an electronic message facility for use by government representatives by the end of 2002.

(b) Access by the general public

(i) The Division for Sustainable Development and the Department of Public Information should meet on a quarterly basis to identify new developments and upcoming events of interest to the media, not necessarily linked to the work of the Commission on Sustainable Development, and decide on what information material should be prepared to better promote sustainable development. Such consultations should be held in the context of the information strategy of the Department of Economic and Social Affairs;

(ii) The Division should facilitate access by regional networks of major group organizations to information on sustainable development, which they could use for wider dissemination to their constituencies.

24. In response to the question of what steps the Division had taken to ensure that both government representatives and the general public had access to information on sustainable development, the Office of Internal Oversight Services was informed that the development and enhancement of the Division's current web site after the World Summit on Sustainable Development had been the most significant step taken. The Office of Internal Oversight Services conducted a review of the Division's web site and found it to be comprehensive, easy to navigate, current and useful. In fact, many of the documents used in conducting the present triennial review were easily obtained from the web site. The Office of Internal Oversight Services also noted evidence that the web site is regularly updated, when a summary of a January 2004 meeting of the Bureau of the twelfth session of the Commission on Sustainable Development was posted just days after the meeting had occurred. The results of the Office of Internal Oversight Services survey support this assessment. Three fourths of all respondents (14 out of 19) rated the web site as "very good" or "good" with regard to ease of extracting information. In addition, the majority of respondents (13 out of 19) said that the web site currently met their needs for online services.

25. The quarterly *CSD Update* online newsletters provide an additional means of providing information to Governments and the general public. This online update is distributed four to five times a year, with the latest having been issued in November

2003. The Division for Sustainable Development also adheres to the six-week rule for providing summaries of reports prior to meetings of the Commission, as evidenced by the recent note from the Division on the forthcoming twelfth session to the effect that official reports would be issued at least six weeks before the review session of the Commission.

26. Further, the Division maintains regular contact and partnerships with the Department of Public Information and one of its staff members is assigned as the focal point with the Department. Specific examples of collaboration between the Division and the Department of Public Information include working together on the brochure "Partnerships for Sustainable Development"[8] which was completed in August 2003. The Department of Public Information is also working with the Division to set up exhibits and videoconferencing for the twelfth session of the Commission.

27. In addition, the Division maintains regular contact with and takes the initiative to obtain feedback from major groups, with which it holds monthly teleconferences. A post has been approved for the Division's work on partnerships. The Division has created a "major groups" page on its web site and also plans to organize a partnership fair as part of the review session of the Commission. It is noteworthy that 11 out of 19 respondents to the Office of Internal Oversight Services survey believed that the Division sufficiently involved major groups concerned with sustainable development.

28. The Office of Internal Oversight Services believes there is sufficient evidence to conclude that recommendation 5 was implemented. In particular, the enhancement of the web site of the Division for Sustainable Development must be seen as a significant accomplishment.

C. Inter-agency coordination on sustainable development

Recommendation 6
Inter-agency coordination

(a) Reformulating terms of reference. To enhance the benefits of a coordinated implementation of Agenda 21 and related commitments, the Inter-Agency Committee on Sustainable Development should review the terms of reference of the task manager function and of the secretariat of the Committee. As a result of the review, the Committee — or any successor coordination mechanism established in accordance with paragraph 38.16 of Agenda 21 — should identify:

(i) The concrete actions expected from task managers, inter alia, to maintain interactions among organizations, submit timely reporting to the Division for Sustainable Development and report on difficulties in programme implementation that may require the Division's attention;

(ii) The concrete actions expected from its secretariat, the Division, inter alia, to monitor the effectiveness of coordination arrangements, to bring to the attention of the Inter-Agency Committee on Sustainable Development new issues and to represent the Committee's concerns in other inter-agency mechanisms;

(iii) Other organizations and divisions of the Department of Economic and Social Affairs that would assume a number of task manager responsibilities presently assigned to the Division, to enable the Division to focus on its secretariat function.

(b) Secondment of experts to the Division for Sustainable Development:

(i) During the time when the Commission on Sustainable Development is focusing its work on one main topic, which requires in-depth and current knowledge of developments in the field, the Division for Sustainable Development should obtain the secondment of relevant expert personnel from United Nations organizations to coordinate the preparation of reports submitted to the Commission, to carry out liaison with the secretariats of other intergovernmental processes and to assist the Commission, its intersessional groups and Bureau, at their request, with briefings, substantive advice and notes;

(ii) When the cost of such secondments cannot be covered from contributing organizations or the Division's existing resources, the Division should seek additional voluntary contributions from donor Governments.

29. Although the Inter-Agency Committee on Sustainable Development and its task manager system have been abolished, the Office of Internal Oversight Services was informed that the Division continued informally to rely on such a system when preparing the reports of the Secretary-General. The Division also relied on a list of agency focal points in order to coordinate its efforts with other United Nations agencies. Specific examples of collaboration include the meeting held in Marrakesh in June 2003, which the Division organized together with UNEP (see para. 10 above), and the Division's work with the United Nations Development Programme (UNDP) in conducting workshops and implementing projects on sustainable development capacity-building at the country level.

30. The Division has not significantly used secondment of United Nations experts over the past three years. *The Department stated that it worked closely with experts in specialized agencies.* In 2001, two consultants were funded by a grant from the World Bank under a project entitled "Global Initiatives on Transport Emissions". The Division had a secondment from the Global Environment Facility secretariat, as part of its preparations for the World Summit on Sustainable Development, and has also used secondments from the Food and Agriculture Organization of the United Nations and UNEP.

31. The Office of Internal Oversight Services believes there is sufficient evidence to conclude that recommendation 6 was implemented.

D. Support to sustainable development programmes

Recommendation 7
Support to national sustainable development programmes

(a) Exchange of national experience. Regarding the exchange of experience on national sustainable development strategies and programmes, the Division for Sustainable Development should, in particular:

(i) Promote the exchange of experience as a regular agenda item of regional and subregional organizations;

(ii) Support regional and subregional assessments of the implementation of sustainable development goals, in collaboration with the regional commissions and other members of the Inter-Agency Committee on Sustainable Development;

(iii) Provide to national officials reporting on national implementation of Agenda 21 the information needed to reach other national contact points working on similar issues.

(b) Use of national sustainable development strategies. Drawing from experience at the national level and in collaboration with UNDP, the Division for Sustainable Development should monitor progress made in the use of national sustainable development strategies through the common country assessment process and the work of the United Nations Development Group.

32. The Division for Sustainable Development, through its regional and global meetings, facilitates the exchange of national experiences. The Plan of Implementation adopted at the World Summit on Sustainable Development stated that both the implementation of Agenda 21 and the outcomes of the Summit should be accomplished at the regional and subregional levels through the regional commissions and other bodies. As a most recent example, regional input for the twelfth session of the Commission on Sustainable Development was obtained through a series of regional implementation meetings held at the Economic and Social Commission for Western Asia, the Economic Commission for Latin America and the Caribbean, the Economic and Social Commission for Asia and the Pacific, the Economic Commission for Africa and the Economic Commission for Europe.

33. As previously discussed (see para. 11 above), the International Forum on National Sustainable Development Strategies, which was convened in Accra, in November 2001, identified a list of key characteristics that are vital to a solid national sustainable development strategy. Based on recommendations made at that meeting, the Division prepared background paper No. 13, entitled "Guidance in preparing a national sustainable development strategy: managing sustainable development in the new millennium",[9] which was submitted at the second meeting of the Preparatory Committee for the World Summit on Sustainable Development in 2002. The paper presented five underlying elements to effective strategies: (a) country ownership and strong political commitment; (b) integrated economic, social and environmental objectives across sectors, territories and generations; (c) broad participation and effective partnerships; (d) development of capacity and enabling environment; and (e) focus on outcomes and means of implementation. Further, as previously discussed (see para. 29), the Division works with UNDP in conducting workshops and implementing projects on sustainable development at the country level, which includes the use of the common country assessment process.

34. Nevertheless, the results of the Office of Internal Oversight Services survey identify vulnerabilities in the use of indicators to monitor the development and implementation of national sustainable development strategies. Most respondents (14 out of 19) did not believe that the sustainable development indicators and objectives adopted by the Commission on Sustainable Development were being used as tools by national Governments to assess their own progress on sustainable

development. Further, 16 out of 19 respondents said that national Governments were not conducting sufficient monitoring of their own national strategies.

35. While the Office of Internal Oversight Services believes there is sufficient evidence to conclude that the Division has taken steps to implement recommendation 7, it should strengthen its support to national Governments by considering ways in which to further facilitate and support their monitoring of their own sustainable development strategies. It is recognized that the effectiveness of such efforts will need to be considered within the context of broad alliances of intergovernmental organizations providing support to national Governments on their sustainable development strategies.

Recommendation 8
Technical assistance provided by the Department of Economic and Social Affairs

(a) Promoting capacity. As part of the Department of Economic and Social Affairs review of its programme of technical assistance to promote better its capacity to assist, the Division for Sustainable Development should:

(i) Identify areas where other organizations carry out similar activities with similar institutional advantages, such as the regional commissions, and maintain regular interactions with those organizations to develop a coordinated programme of assistance;

(ii) Identify areas of technical assistance where it can carry out activities that are unique.

(b) Critical situations. In the areas of natural resources management where the Division for Sustainable Development is mandated to provide technical assistance and to take into account the results of the review referred to in subparagraph (a) above, in order to ensure that critical situations are not left without adequate response, the Division should:

(i) Promote multisectoral approaches, good practices and knowledge-sharing for practical application in national and local contexts, testing and evaluation.

36. According to its web site, the Division provides targeted parliamentary, analytical and technical advisory services at the request of individual Governments and that special expertise is available in freshwater management, energy, infrastructure and land management and mineral resources. Expertise is also available on financial issues related to economic development, social development and environmental protection. The web site identifies 16 different advisers and regular staff with expertise in a wide range of sectors, including energy, natural resources and water.

37. The Water, Natural Resources and Small Island Developing States Branch of the Division received requests for technical assistance and advisory services from several countries in 2003, including Nicaragua, the Niger, Tajikistan, Yemen and several small island developing States. In that same year, the Energy and Transport Branch received requests for technical assistance and advisory services from 16 countries, among them Cameroon, China, Ecuador and India. According to staff, these requests are handled on a "case-by-case basis", depending on the staffing and resources available. The Division attempts to comply with all the demands, including by using external expertise. The Division's technical assistance

programme is also designed to address critical situations when they emerge, by sending a mission to assess immediate damage and/or by helping Governments to recover from the crises. One recent example of the Division offering its assistance was with arsenic poisoning of the water supply in Bangladesh. Staff at the Division also stated that another important component of its technical assistance programme was its role as a link between intergovernmental processes and the situation at the national level.

38. The Office of Internal Oversight Services was informed that a multisectoral approach was increasingly being taken in the technical assistance programme of the Division. For example, the water and energy sections are working jointly on a technical assistance project in the Gambia. Staff of the Division stated that such a multisectoral approach improved project delivery and efficient use of resources and made it easier to obtain project funding from external sources. This broadening approach also incorporates non-governmental organizations and the private sector. For example, in 2001, both non-governmental organizations and the private sector were asked to submit "success stories" for sustainable development strategies on energy, transportation and atmosphere. These were distributed at the World Summit on Sustainable Development in 2002. Further, the Division identifies areas where other organizations carry out similar technical assistance activities. For example, the Division is the secretariat for "UN Water", which is a group comprising over 20 different United Nations agencies concerned with water issues. Finally, the Division is making an effort to utilize additional funding sources for its technical assistance programme, such as the Development Account and the Japanese Human Security Trust Fund.

39. Virtually all respondents to the Office of Internal Oversight Services survey stated that both the amount and the quality of technical assistance for Agenda 21 (10 out of 12 respondents who offered an opinion) and for the Johannesburg Plan of Implementation (8 out of 8 respondents who offered an opinion) had either increased or stayed the same over the past three years. Some respondents, however, stated that not all of their needs for technical assistance were being met.

40. The Office of Internal Oversight Services believes that, while there is sufficient evidence to conclude that recommendation 8 was implemented, the Division should consider ways and means by which to strengthen its technical assistance programme.

Recommendation 9
Funding of sustainable development programmes

On a biennial basis, the Division for Sustainable Development should organize an exchange of experience among members of the Inter-Agency Committee on Sustainable Development on funding sustainable development programmes, through, inter alia, reviewing experience with specialized small-sized funds, access to global funds or mainstreaming sustainable development activities in broader financing for development arrangements.

41. The Inter-Agency Committee has been abolished and is therefore no longer a mechanism for coordination. However, the Office of Internal Oversight Services considers that other forums have addressed the issue of funding sustainable development programmes. In March 2002, the International Conference on Financing for Development[10] addressed the challenges of financing for development

around the world, particularly in developing countries. In particular, the Conference discussed ways in which to mobilize and increase the effective use of financial resources and international trade for sustainable development. The World Summit on Sustainable Development also included financing for sustainable development in its agenda. During the Summit, more than 220 partnerships, representing $235 million in resources, were identified to complement government commitments.

42. The Office of Internal Oversight Services believes there is sufficient evidence to conclude that recommendation 9 was implemented.

Recommendation 10
Action by the Commission on Sustainable Development

The present report, together with the conclusions and recommendations of the Committee for Programme and Coordination thereon, should be submitted to the Commission on Sustainable Development at its tenth session for review and action.

43. The Office of Internal Oversight Services in-depth evaluation of sustainable development was provided as background material to the Commission at its tenth session, acting as the Preparatory Committee for the World Summit on Sustainable Development. The Office of Internal Oversight Services therefore considers that recommendation 10 was implemented.

III. Conclusion

44. **Over the past three years, progress has been made towards promoting and strengthening the sustainable development agenda. The 2003 report of the Secretary-General on the World Summit on Sustainable Development[11] presents proposals for strengthening the intergovernmental review process for Agenda 21 and defines the role of different United Nations entities and other international institutions in sustainable development. The Division for Sustainable Development has also successfully partnered with other United Nations agencies in the sustainable development arena.**

45. **Further, the enhancement of the Division's web site, its quarterly Commission on Sustainable Development newsletters, and its ongoing partnership with the Department of Public Information have all served to increase access to information by both government representatives and the public. The Division has also improved the quality of that information by increasingly incorporating regional and major group perspectives and by relying on diversified sources of information from other United Nations agencies and the scientific and business communities.**

46. **Through its regional and global meetings, the Division has facilitated the exchange of national experiences and has provided guidance for national sustainable development strategies. Further, it provides technical assistance to countries by executing projects, sending advisers, identifying external experts, responding to critical situations and acting as a link between intergovernmental processes and the situation at the national level.**

47. **Greater efforts should be made to address a number of issues that warrant continued attention. These include the continuing dissemination of the concept of sustainable development (incorporating its social, economic and**

environmental pillars and its emphasis on integration), continued efforts to streamline national reporting, further facilitation and support of national Governments' monitoring of their own sustainable development strategies and strengthening of the technical cooperation programme of the Division for Sustainable Development.

48. **The sustainable development environment is a dynamic one with changing priorities and agendas. In fact, 14 out of 19 respondents to the Office of Internal Oversight Services survey stated that national Governments were faced with too many different strategic priorities when implementing their national sustainable development strategies. In addition, 6 out of 19 respondents volunteered that there was still a need for greater inter-agency coordination and mainstreaming of sustainable development activities. It is the opinion of the Office of Internal Oversight Services that the Division for Sustainable Development can continue to play an important role in coordinating and harmonizing the future agenda for sustainable development.**

49. **The Office of Internal Oversight Services therefore considers that the Division for Sustainable Development, as the secretariat of the Commission on Sustainable Development and with its experience and expertise, is well positioned to play a significant role in furthering the goals of sustainable development in the future. The World Summit on Sustainable Development largely established the future work plan for the Division. Its leadership has identified both challenges and opportunities and has developed a strong agenda to correspond with the priorities of sustainable development over the next 15 years. The Division for Sustainable Development should continue its efforts to reach out to and work with other United Nations agencies, the regional commissions, major groups of Agenda 21 and the business community.**

(*Signed*) Dileep **Nair**
Under-Secretary-General for Internal Oversight Services

Notes

[1] *Official Records of the General Assembly, Fifty-sixth Session, Supplement No. 16* (A/56/16), paras. 366-368.

[2] *Report of the United Nations Conference on Environment and Development, Rio de Janeiro, 3-14 June 1992* (United Nations publication, Sales No. E.93.I.8 and corrigenda), vol. I: *Resolutions adopted by the Conference*, resolution 1, annex II.

[3] Resolution S-19/2, annex.

[4] *Report of the World Summit on Sustainable Development, Johannesburg, South Africa, 26 August-4 September 2002* (United Nations publication, Sales No. E.03.II.A.1 and corrigendum), chap. I, resolution 2, annex.

[5] *Report of the Global Conference on the Sustainable Development of Small Island Developing States, Bridgetown, Barbados, 25 April-6 May 1994* (United Nations publication, Sales No. E.94.I.18 and corrigenda), chap. I, resolution 1, annex II.

[6] E/CN.17/2003/2, para. 25 (d).

[7] E/CN.17/2003/BP.3.

[8] DPI/2323.

[9] E/CN.17/2002/BP.13.

[10] *Report of the International Conference on Financing for Development, Monterrey, Mexico, 18-22 March 2002* (United Nations publication, Sales No. E.02.II.A.7), chap. I, resolution 1, annex.

[11] A/58/210.

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Programme questions: evaluation

Triennial review of the implementation of the recommendations made by the Committee for Programme and Coordination at its forty-first session on the in-depth evaluation of the population programme

Note by the Secretary-General**

In conformity with General Assembly resolution 48/218 B of 29 July 1994 and 54/244 of 23 December 1999, the Secretary-General has the honour to transmit herewith the report of the Office of Internal Oversight Services on the in-depth evaluation of the population programme (E/AC.51/2001/3). The report has been reviewed by the relevant departments and offices. The Secretary-General takes note of its findings and concurs with its recommendations.

* E/AC.51/2004.1.
** Submission of the present report was delayed in order to allow for the review of comments received from partners and users of services of the Department of Economic and Social Affairs.

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Annex

Report of the Office of Internal Oversight Services on the triennial review of the implementation of the recommendations made by the Committee for Programme and Coordination at its forty-first session on the in-depth evaluation of the population programme

Summary

The present report is submitted in accordance with the decision taken by the Committee for Programme and Coordination at its twenty-second session to review the implementation of its recommendations three years after taking decisions on in-depth evaluations.

The triennial review leads to the conclusion that the Population Division of the Department of Economic and Social Affairs has taken adequate measures towards implementing the Committee's recommendations on the evaluation of population. As a result of actions taken since 2001, the Division has enhanced the quality of its outputs through clarification of its methods and assumptions. It has used interdisciplinary approaches to analyse the interrelationships between population and other aspects of development, such as environment and education, and in the process, has developed greater collaboration with other divisions of the Department, as well as with other offices and agencies of the United Nations system.

The Statistics Division in the Department of Economic and Social Affairs, which is responsible for assisting countries to operate and maintain systems of civil registration and vital statistics, has taken significant steps to build national capacity in those areas. Those efforts, in turn, contribute to increasing the reliability of countries' demographic data, which is used by the Population Division in its population projections and estimates. The regional commissions, in collaboration with the Statistics Division, have also taken measures to build national capacity in methods of demographic and social statistics, including data collection.

The Population Division has taken adequate measures to increase the free dissemination of its products through its two web sites. The Office of Internal Oversight Services noted: (a) the existence of a certain amount of overlap between the Division web site and the Population Information Network (POPIN) web site; and (b) a decrease in the networking capacity of POPIN, owing to the phasing out of the post of coordinator and the inactivity of the POPIN Advisory Committee. While the Division has ensured that the two web sites are complementary and that there is no duplication of tasks and staffing related to their maintenance, in the future it should consider the need for networking by the users of demographic data and work more closely with the Department of Public Information to facilitate the sales of its publications.

The Office of Internal Oversight Services found that the Economic Commission for Africa (ECA), the Economic and Social Commission for Asia and the Pacific (ESCAP) and the Economic and Social Commission for Western Asia (ESCWA), which during the past 10 years have consolidated their population activities into broader social development programmes, have taken measures to assist countries in

integrating the population dimension in their development plans and policies through the dissemination of computer simulation models, publications and training workshops. There have been increasing exchanges between the regional commissions and the Department of Economic and Social Affairs on work methods and procedures, and joint participation in conferences and working groups on emerging issues. Negative effects of the consolidation have been a decline in staffing resources dedicated to population work and a reduced capacity to conduct demographic research and basic data collection. Several regional commissions were successful in obtaining contributions from Governments and research institutions in support of convening population conferences and conducting research. However, ECA, the Economic Commission for Europe (ECE), ESCAP and ESCWA have not been able to offset the gap caused by the reduction in regular budget resources and/or extrabudgetary funds contributed by the United Nations Population Fund.

There has been clear progress in implementing many of the Committee's recommendations. The Office of Internal Oversight Services believes that the complex and dynamic interactions between population, poverty and the environment at the global, regional and national levels should continue to be an important focus of the subprogramme. While there is increasing awareness of the importance of the population dimension in the formulation of social policies at the national level, due to the shifting priorities of funds and programmes and a decline in regular budget resources in the regional commissions, there has been less emphasis placed on basic demographic research, particularly at the regional level. As empirically grounded research and data on demographic trends is extremely valuable in guiding the development of national population policies, it is important for Member States, multilateral organizations and the private sector to provide financial support to the population research agenda to offset the decline in resources noted above.

Contents

		Paragraphs	*Page*
I.	Introduction	1–3	4
II.	Findings	4–56	4
	A. Strengthening data collection, analysis and coverage of information by the central programme	5–28	6
	B. Dissemination of information	29–37	10
	C. Activities of the regional commissions	38–55	13
	D. Intergovernmental review	56	17
III.	Conclusions	57–60	18

I. Introduction

1. At its forty-first session, in 2001, the Committee for Programme and Coordination considered the report of the Office of Internal Oversight Services on the in-depth evaluation of population (E/AC.51/2001/3) and endorsed all 11 recommendations contained in the evaluation report. In addition, the Committee recommended that the Population Division improve its work in six areas covered by 6 additional recommendations of the Committee, which it identified as recommendations (a) through (f).[1] Thus, the Committee adopted a total of 17 recommendations. The present report contains the findings of the triennial review conducted to determine the extent to which the Committee's recommendations made three years ago have been implemented.

2. The population programme is implemented by the Population Division of the Department of Economic and Social Affairs, which provides substantive support to the Commission on Population and Development, monitoring of population trends and policies, analysis and projections of demographic data and dissemination. The programme is also implemented at the regional level by the regional commissions.

3. The present triennial review is based on: (a) the information provided by the Division and the regional commissions on progress made in implementing the recommendations of the Committee for Programme and Coordination, a process which is monitored twice a year by the Office of Internal Oversight Services; (b) a review undertaken in early 2004 of the relevant documents obtained from the Division and the regional commissions; and (c) a survey done in late 2003 of different United Nations agencies and institutions concerned with population issues.

II. Findings

4. Considering that the additional recommendations of the Committee for Programme and Coordination (see para. 1 above) touched upon several issues addressed in the evaluation report, in the sections below, recommendations have been grouped by programme topics to facilitate the review of their implementation by the Committee and to avoid repetition, as shown in the table below.

Grouping of recommendations of the Committee for Programme and Coordination by programme topics

Programme topic	*Review of implementation of recommendations*	*Review of implementation of additional recommendations of the Committee*
A. Strengthening data collection, analysis and coverage of information by the central programme	1. Improving the coverage of information on population activities presented to the Commission on Population and Development	(a) Use of reliable country data
	2. Enhancing the quality and usefulness of the Division's output	(b) Helping countries to strengthen systems of routine data collection
	5. Funding	(c) Inclusion of a poverty focus within some of the Population Division's analysis
	6. Interdisciplinary approaches to population issues	(d) Inclusion of the important dimension of the environment in the Division's research
	9. Gender mainstreaming	
B. Dissemination of information	4. Future of the Population Information Network	(e) Coordination of efforts in maintaining the two web sites (POPIN and the Population Division web site) to reduce any duplication
	3. Print publications on population	(f) Dissemination of information through the Internet to ensure that no information is available solely through sales publications
C. Activities of the regional commissions	7. Assessment of restructuring in the regional commissions	
	8. More active exchange of experience	
	10. Extrabudgetary funding for population activities of the regional commissions	
D. Intergovernmental review	11. Review of the evaluation report and related Committee for Programme and Coordination recommendations by the Commission on Population and Development	

A. Strengthening data collection, analysis and coverage of information by the central programme

Recommendation 1
Improving the coverage of information on population activities presented to the Commission on Population and Development

The Commission on Population and Development may consider the need for an overview report and decide on its nature, scope and periodicity, as well as on arrangements for the preparation of such a report based on a proposal to be prepared by the Population Division, after consultation with the United Nations Population Fund (UNFPA), the regional commissions, specialized agencies and funds, the International Organization for Migration and non-governmental organizations.

5. The Division did not prepare a proposal for a comprehensive report because it believed that the issue had been settled in 1995 when the Commission had decided to have only oral reports in lieu of a written report. Nonetheless, the Commission's Bureau was informed of the above Office of Internal Oversight Services recommendation at its intersessional meeting of November 2001 and again at the thirty-fifth session of the Commission on Population and Development in 2002. The Commission will review its needs for documentation at its thirty-seventh session under agenda item 4, entitled "Review of the methods work of the Commission on Population and Development".

6. The Division did not prepare a proposal as recommended, based on a valid rationale. Nonetheless, the Commission will have the opportunity to re-examine its need for documentation at its thirty-seventh session, during the last week of March 2004.

Recommendation 2
Enhancing the quality and usefulness of the Division's output

In future publications, the Population Division should provide clear statements on the methodology and assumptions underlying its estimates and projections, and provide more interpretation of results, including identification of emerging issues in a less technical, more user-friendly format.

7. In the light of the recommendation, the Division has adopted the practice of issuing executive summaries, including results of its studies and highlights of its publications in a less technical and more user-friendly format. All the documents and publications reviewed by the Office of Internal Oversight Services contained a section on methodology. *World Population Prospects, The 2002 Revision*, published in 2003, included a section clarifying changes and adjustments made to procedures followed in the 2000 revision. A study entitled "The impact of AIDS", published in 2003, devoted an entire chapter to various methodologies used in studying the impact of AIDS and identified areas where future research was needed. The *International Migration Report, 2002*[2] devotes a chapter to definitions, sources of data and methodologies, and the *World Urbanization Prospects: The 2001 Revision*, contains a chapter on procedures to estimate and project the population of urban areas and urban agglomeration, which clarifies methods used for the projections. In 2002, the Division also published a report on methods for estimating adult mortality.

8. Most of the major users of the Division's outputs who responded to the Office of Internal Oversight Services survey stated that the Division had clarified both the assumptions underlying the 2002 revisions of the *World Population Prospects* and the methodology of its other publications. However, some respondents indicated that more clarification was needed as to why fertility rates for specific countries had been changed in relation to the 2000 revision. Some of the Division's projections consider the increased mortality risks to which some populations will be subjected, particularly because of HIV/AIDS. While recognizing the magnitude of the task involved in including in the projections different mortality variants for every country, a respondent suggested that it would be useful for the Division to provide illustrative calculations showing the impact of alternative future mortality trends caused by factors others than HIV/AIDS.

9. The Office of Internal Oversight Services considers that recommendation 2 was implemented in a satisfactory manner.

Recommendation 5
Funding

The Population Division should submit research proposals for consideration to the United Nations Population Fund (UNFPA), foundations and other donors in the areas of fertility and reproductive health, ageing, international migration and population and development.

10. The Division has submitted research proposals to donor organizations for funding. In 2001, the Division received support from the MacArthur Foundation on fertility transition and from the United States of America's National Institute on Aging for a research project.

11. While the Office of Internal Oversight Services considers that the Division has taken steps to implement recommendation 5, it should continue its efforts in this area.

Recommendation 6
Interdisciplinary approaches to population issues

In order to improve further the quality of estimates and projections, to enhance understanding of the interrelationships between population and development and to promote substantive linkages among the various sections, the Population Division should develop task forces or joint projects and encourage interdisciplinary approaches to foster collaboration between the Division and other units within the Department of Economic and Social Affairs and other programmes and agencies, including collaboration on technical assistance.

12. Regarding the need for the Division to adopt more interdisciplinary approaches and form joint task forces, the Office of Internal Oversight Services observed that interdisciplinary approaches have been used, particularly in the work of the Division related to monitoring population trends and policies. These interdisciplinary approaches have been used to explore, for example, the relationships between population and the environment and between population and reproductive rights, reproductive health and HIV/AIDS. In these studies, as well as in others involving ageing and migration, the Division has collaborated with other divisions in the

Department, as well as with other offices and agencies of the United Nations system. More recently, in 2003, the Division collaborated with the United Nations Educational, Scientific and Cultural Organization (UNESCO) International Institute of Statistics on the interrelationships between population, education and development, which resulted in a United Nations publication in 2003.[3] In 2003, the Division also organized the second Coordination Meeting on International Migration which considered all aspects on international migration, in particular economic issues such as remittances, social issues, such as human trafficking, and political issues, such as security. One of the major objectives of the meeting was the continued collaboration among all offices in the United Nations system active in the area of international migration, as well as intergovernmental organizations, regional organizations and non-governmental organizations. The General Assembly has recognized the value of this activity, as evidenced by its recent resolution 58/208 of 23 December 2003, in which the Assembly encouraged the Division to continue convening such meetings on international migration.

13. Of the regional commissions that commented on their collaboration with the Division, two expressed satisfaction with it, while one expressed the view that, during the past two years, collaboration had been limited and stated the need for greater cooperation to analyse the interlinkages between population and poverty at the regional level.

14. The Office of Internal Oversight Services is of the view that, overall, the Division has implemented recommendation 6. It is anticipated that collaboration with the regional commissions will be further strengthened.

Recommendation 9
Gender mainstreaming

Resources permitting, the urban projections of the Population Division should be disaggregated by sex and age.

15. The Division has stated that it would be willing to implement the recommendation if resources were available. So far this has not occurred. There is no evidence that the Division took the required action by making changes through the budgetary process.

Additional recommendations of the Committee for Programme and Coordination

Recommendation (a)

The Population Division should improve its work in the use of reliable country data.

16. The Division has always tried to use the most reliable country data available, both when undertaking its biennial revisions of world population estimates and projections and in its other studies. The Division cooperates with the Statistics Division of the Department of Economic and Social Affairs, regional commissions and other international and regional bodies to ensure that it has access to the latest reliable data available. New actions taken during the report period are discussed in paragraphs 18 to 21 below.

17. The Office of Internal Oversight Services considers that the Division has implemented the Committee's additional recommendation (a).

Recommendation (b)

The Population Division should improve its work in helping countries to strengthen systems of routine data collection.

18. This task is the responsibility of the Demographic Statistics Section of the United Nations Statistics Division and the statistics units in the various regional commissions.

19. At its twenty-sixth session, in 1991, the Statistical Commission adopted the International Programme for Accelerating the Improvement of Vital Statistics and Civil Registration Systems. The programme's objective was to assist countries that lack or have an incomplete civil registration system in developing in a coordinated manner the capability to operate and maintain the fundamental systems of civil registration and vital statistics. Accordingly, the Statistics Division has provided technical guidance to countries and encouraged them to undertake self-sustaining programmes to strengthen their civil registration and vital statistics systems, with emphasis on national efforts and genuine commitment to long-term reform. Technical guidance was provided through publications, training and the convening of expert group meetings.

20. Some of the regional commissions have also been active in assisting countries in strengthening their routine systems of data collection. In collaboration with the Department's Statistics Division and UNFPA, ESCAP has provided advisory services to countries to build national capacity in improving population data collection. In addition, the Statistical Institute of Asia and the Pacific in Tokyo, a regional institute subsidiary of ESCAP, conducts regular training programmes which include concepts and methods related to demographic and social statistics. Future ESCAP activities will include the provision of assistance to national statistical offices in the region on the measurement of disability.

21. The ESCWA team on social statistics and indicators, in collaboration with the Department's Statistics Division, has provided assistance to strengthen national statistical capacity and develop common methodologies for this purpose in the ESCWA region. A series of workshops were organized in 2002 and 2003 on the topics of management and harmonization of census methodologies, including concepts and definitions, as well as processing data using modern techniques. Emphasis has been placed on the importance of collecting accurate, timely and reliable data to serve as a basis for socio-economic policies.

22. The Office of Internal Oversight Services believes that additional Committee recommendation (b) was adequately implemented by the Department of Economic and Social Affairs and by some regional commissions.

Recommendation (c)

The Population Division should improve its work on inclusion of a poverty focus within some of its analysis.

23. The Division has included indicators of poverty in its 2002 and its forthcoming 2004 databank on population resources, environment and development, and has included poverty aspects when relevant in its other substantive studies.

24. While most of respondents to the Office of Internal Oversight Services survey stated that the Division had included an appropriate focus on poverty in its analysis, several respondents were either not aware of it or expressed the need for more analysis of the complex interactions between population dynamics and poverty, particularly at the regional level.

25. The Office of Internal Oversight Services believes that the Division has made an effort to implement the Committee's additional recommendation (c) but that it should conduct more analysis of the complex interactions between population dynamics and poverty, possibly in collaboration with the regional commissions.

Recommendation (d)

The Population Division should improve its work on the inclusion of the important dimension of the environment in its research.

26. Most of the respondents to the Office of Internal Oversight Services survey agreed that there had been improvement in this area.

27. The Population Division issued the following materials during 2001 on population, environment and development: *Population, Environment and Development: The Concise Report*;[4] *World Population Monitoring: Population, Environment and Development*;[5] and a wall chart on population, environment and development. In 2002, it issued the databank on population, resources, environment and development.

28. The Office of Internal Oversight Services believes that the Division has made a satisfactory effort to implement Committee additional recommendation (d).

B. Dissemination of information

Recommendation 3
Print publications on population

United Nations print publications on population should consist of:

(a) Publications that are issued as sales publications as a matter of record or for other non-commercial reasons, for which print runs should continue to be small. The same information can be issued additionally in mimeograph or similar inexpensive print or machine-readable forms and distributed free of charge. The information contained in these print publications should also be disseminated through the Population Information Network (POPIN) and posted on the Division's web site;

(b) Publications that are of potential commercial significance, which should be financed, produced, advertised and sold, so as to maximize sales revenues, with online information made available in a manner that protects the United Nations commercial interest in those publications. Advertising, book launches and other publicity events should be organized for these publications;

(c) Not-for-sale publications, which should be distributed free in an inexpensive print form and posted on the POPIN and Division web sites.

Related additional recommendation of the Committee for Programme and Coordination

Recommendation (f)

The Population Division should improve its work on dissemination of information through the Internet to ensure that no information is available solely through sales publications.

29. The Division collaborated closely with the Sales and Marketing Section of the Department of Public Information in promoting and marketing its publications through press releases, print advertisements, special mailings and promotion, through attendance at professional conferences and book fairs and through the Department of Public Information web site. The Department's marketing efforts in this area have increased, as evidenced by the yearly mailing of a specialized brochure containing information on recent United Nations publications on population and demography. However, despite these efforts, there has been a slight decline in the average sales of Population Division publications over the past three years (from 390 copies in 2001 to 320 in 2003). This decline could be attributed to the Division's practice of posting on its web site the full text of many of its sales publications including major titles with significant commercial potential (see para. 30 below). The Office of Internal Oversight Services also noted that the Division sells some of its publications listed on its web site directly, without linking to the Department of Public Information web site for the processing of orders.

30. The Division stated that, in response to recommendation 3, as well as to delays in the editing and printing process of its publications, it had adopted the practice of posting its publications in their entirety, or their executive summary on the Population Division web site. The Division's analysis of the server logs that track the traffic to the POPIN web site indicate that there were approximately 500,000 pages visits in 2002.

31. It should be noted that one of the Division's expected accomplishments in its budget for the biennium 2002-2003 had been improved and timely access by Governments and civil society, including non-governmental organizations, to the United Nations research findings in the field of population and development, including via the Internet, as measured by indicators such as the frequency of use of research findings in the field of population and development, as evidenced by references made by Member States and civil societies on the issues of population and development.

32. Based on the above, the Office of Internal Oversight Services concludes that recommendations 3 (a), 3 (c) and Committee additional recommendation (f) have been satisfactorily implemented. Recommendation 3 (b) was partially implemented. While recognizing the Division's concerns to make its new publications available on the Internet to maximize their impact and overcome delays in printing, the Office of Internal Oversight Services believes that the Division should work more closely with the Department of Public Information to facilitate the sales of its publications through linking to that Department's web site for the processing of orders.

Recommendation 4
Future of the Population Information Network

(a) Given the value of POPIN and the Global POPIN Coordinating Unit, the Population Division should, in collaboration with UNFPA, energetically seek both regular and extrabudgetary funds to ensure the continuation of existing POPIN activities;

(b) Decisions affecting the future status, scope and direction of the POPIN work programme and its relation to the work programme of the Division should be addressed to the POPIN Advisory/Coordinating Committee, which includes representation from the primary donor and the regional commissions;

(c) Population information generated in ESCWA should be posted on its POPIN web site as soon as possible.

Related additional recommendation of the Committee for Programme and Coordination

Recommendation (e)

The Population Division should improve its work on coordination of efforts in maintaining the two web sites (POPIN and the Division web site) to reduce any duplication.

33. Since the 2001 evaluation,[5] the Division has made a number of changes to POPIN. In the course of 2001, with funding provided by UNFPA, the POPIN web site was redesigned to make it easier for users to navigate it and a search engine was introduced to aid users in finding relevant links and files within the POPIN system. However, in 2002, UNFPA support for this activity ceased and, in the absence of an alternative source of funding, the post of network coordinator was phased out. The Division stated that, owing to the lack of a Professional post for undertaking population information technology activities, future development and updating of POPIN would be limited. While a majority of respondents to the survey found the POPIN web site useful, a minority found that its usefulness as a network had declined. The reason given was that, owing to the loss of the coordinator post, the network had been redefined as a web site and that the valued added of having a coordinator and continuous interaction between the centre and the nodes was now lacking.

34. In relation to the need for the future of POPIN to be discussed in the POPIN Advisory/Coordinating Committee (recommendation 4 (b)), since the POPIN Advisory Committee, which used to serve as a hub for networking by POPIN users and contributors of information, no longer meets, the need for networking by the users of demographic information must be an important consideration in the future.

35. As regards the Committee's additional recommendation (e), that there should be coordination between the Division web site and POPIN to reduce any duplication, the Office of Internal Oversight Services notes that coordination exists since the Division manages both web sites. While the Division web site provides information related to recently issued Population Division research publications and contains documents of the Commission on Population and Development, POPIN is organized to provide links to other United Nations departments, the regional commissions, funds and programmes and specialized agencies involved in

population issues. While the Office of Internal Oversight Services noted the existence of a certain overlap between the two web sites, the Division has worked to ensure their complementarity and there is no duplication of tasks and staffing related to their maintenance.

36. With regard to recommendation 4 (c) that information generated by ESCWA should be posted on its POPIN web site, the Office of Internal Oversight Services review of the ESCWA web site confirmed that the recommendation has been adequately implemented.

37. The Office of Internal Oversight Services considers that recommendation 4 (c) and the Committee's additional recommendation (e) were implemented in an adequate manner, while recommendation 4 (a) was partially implemented. Concerning recommendation 4 (b), since the POPIN Advisory Committee no longer meets, in the future, the Division should consider the need for networking by the users of demographic information.

C. Activities of the regional commissions

Recommendation 7
Assessment of restructuring in the regional commissions

The triennial review of the population programme should include an assessment of the restructuring of population activities in the regional commissions.

38. The Office of Internal Oversight Services reviewed the result of the restructuring of population activities in the regional commissions that had occurred within the past 10 years. This included the population activities in ESCAP (2003), ESCWA (2002) and ECA (1998).

39. As a result of a restructuring that took place in 2003, following a review by ESCAP of its programme of work, population issues have been consolidated in the subprogramme on social development, including emerging social issues, which is implemented by the Population and Social Integration Section. One of the expected accomplishments was to increase attention to emerging social issues so that they could be mainstreamed into Governments' planning and policies. The Section's activities have focused on the theme population, disability and ageing. Activities have continued to include advocacy, monitoring of demographic trends, dissemination of population information and technical assistance. As a result of the restructuring, the Section lost one of the two Professional posts that had been dedicated to population work. The other four posts handle a range of issues related, inter alia, to demographic trends, and population and social integration. In addition, in 2004, UNFPA is funding two Local level and three General Service posts. While it is too early to assess the impact of the recent restructuring on the population activities in ESCAP, it appears that the loss of one post previously dedicated to population issues will have an immediate impact on the level of advisory services provided and on population information activities.

40. In 2002, in line with the restructuring of ESCWA, the Population Section was transformed into the Population and Development Team, with a stronger focus on the interrelationships between population and development, and population policies within the framework of the International Conference on Population and

Development (ICPD) and the five-year review of the implementation of its Programme of Action.[6] The Office of Internal Oversight Services found the following evidence of such integration during the period covered by the present report: a workshop was held on methods and applications on integrating population policy issues, including reproductive health into development planning, and the first issue of a recurrent publication, the ESCWA *Population and Development Report*. The first issue of this publication addressed the severity of water shortages in the region, its impact on people's lives and challenges faced by Arab countries in meeting the demand of their growing populations. At the same time, the Office of Internal Oversight Services observed that the consolidation of population activities into the integrated social policy subprogramme had had a negative effect on the regular budget staff level of the Population and Development Team staff, which declined from three staff members to one, and had negatively affected the capacity of the unit to make a significant contribution in the area of population research. UNFPA has expressed concern that the reduction of regular budget staffing capacity could affect the ability of ESCWA to attract UNFPA funds in the future and has raised this issue with the ESCWA senior management. The ESCWA senior management has addressed that concern by allocating two additional Professional posts to strengthen population-related activities as part of the integrated social policy subprogramme.

41. With the restructuring exercise carried out in ECA in 1996, the Population Division was abolished and population activities were integrated into the new Sustainable Development Division. A major example of the integration of the population activities of ECA into the other development issues is illustrated by the efforts of the Sustainable Development Division, through training and advocacy, to increase the use by countries in the region of the population-environment-development-agriculture simulation model, which demonstrates the medium to long-term impact of alternative national policies on the food security status of the population. Training workshops were organized by the Sustainable Development Division to enhance the capacity of member States to formulate and implement policies and programmes in the interlinked areas of food security. Participants from 10 African countries attended the workshops. An ECA survey of 10 countries in 2003 revealed that the training workshops had contributed to raising awareness of the nexus issues and that actual policies in eight of those countries appeared to be influenced by the population-environment-development-agriculture model. The Office of Internal Oversight Services also observed that the Division's proposed budget for the biennium 2004-2005 showed that there had been a shift of focus towards the 10-year review of the International Conference on Population and Development and an increase in extrabudgetary resources allocated to it, primarily through bilateral contributions. The Office of Internal Oversight Services noted that the above-mentioned expected accomplishments were achieved despite a high rate of staff turnover, due to mobility of Sustainable Development Division staff to other duty stations.

42. The Office of Internal Oversight Services assessment of the implementation of restructuring in the above-mentioned regional commissions is that there has been both a positive and negative impact. One positive finding was that regional commissions had provided assistance to Member States in integrating population factors in their development planning. In one instance (ECA), there was evidence that this assistance has increased Governments' awareness of the interdependence

between population and the other aspects of development. Another positive finding was that there is now a stronger focus on action programmes that grew out of the Programme of Action of the International Conference on Population and Development.[7] On the negative side, there has been a decrease in the attention placed on data collection and analysis. This shift of emphasis is due in great part to the change in priorities of the governing bodies of the United Nations funds and programmes (see para. 48 below), and Governments' preference for funding activities that attract high visibility, such as regional population conferences, usually hosted by the Government donating the funds, over basic population research. Another reason for the decline in research and analysis of population and demography trends has been the decrease in the level of regular budget staffing resources following the restructuring.

43. This decline in basic data collection, research and analysis in population was noted with concern at the 2004 European Population Forum, which was organized jointly by ECE and UNFPA. In the summary of deliberations, the Chairperson stated that the development, monitoring and evaluation of sustainable population policies needed a solid knowledge base, including interdisciplinary research and routine statistics, and that there was a need for Governments, intergovernmental organizations and institutions in the region to provide financial support to advance the population research agenda.

Recommendation 8
More active exchange of experience

There should be more active exchange of experience among staff in the regional commissions dealing with population issues. While some information is available on the respective regional commission web sites, demonstrations of the various products (such as retrieval of data for small areas by microcomputer software (REDATAM) from ECLAC, the population-environment-development-agriculture simulation model in ECA and indicators of achievements of the goals of the International Conference on Population and Development) could be scheduled to coincide with the annual session of the Commission on Population and Development.

44. Several of the regional commissions reported that there had been a satisfactory exchange of experience among staff in the regional commissions and the Population Division at Headquarters. For example, there was greater participation by staff members of the Latin American and Caribbean Demographic Centre in technical meetings organized by the Population Division at Headquarters, and the Division made substantive contributions to seminars and workshops organized by CELADE. This participation resulted in exchange of methodologies in the area of population estimates and projections.

45. ECA mentioned the contribution of the Sustainable Development Division to a workshop on prospects of fertility decline held at Headquarters in 2001, and the participation and contribution of the Population Division in the fourth Meeting of the Follow-Up Committee for the Implementation of the Dakar/Ngor Declaration on Population, Family and Sustainable Development (1992), which was held at ECA headquarters in 2002. The Division also presents an oral report of its activities, including the development of the population-environment-development-agriculture model at every annual session of the Commission on Population and Development.

Information on the model is also available on the Population Division-Africa web page (a web site initially launched under the name of POPIN-Africa, which has been revised extensively to be more user-friendly and to serve as a comprehensive population gateway).

46. ESCWA stated that it was currently in the final stage of completing a population policy information system which would assist in monitoring the implementation of population policies in the region against the goals and objectives set at the international conferences of the 1990s and the United Nations Millennium Declaration. Once completed, the system would be disseminated online through POPIN. ESCWA was also represented at the European Population Forum in early 2004, which was organized jointly by ECE and UNFPA. ECE and ESCAP were respectively represented at the ECE and ESCAP conferences held as follow-up events to the Second World Assembly on Ageing.

47. Based on the above, the Office of Internal Oversight Services considers that recommendation 8 was adequately implemented.

Recommendation 10
Extrabudgetary funding for population activities of the regional commissions

In view of the general decline in UNFPA funding, the regional commissions should actively solicit funds for population-related research and capacity-building.

48. In accordance with UNFPA governing body's expressed priorities in support of operational activities connected with the Programme of Action of the International Conference on Population and Development, the UNFPA regional divisions have provided support to the United Nations regional commissions in connection with the tenth anniversary of the Conference. This support has included regional reviews and analysis of the results of the Field Inquiry — a study designed to capture progress achieved by countries in implementing various commitments contained in the Programme of Action of the Conference and key actions, as well as the difficulties and constraints that those countries have faced. On the other hand, there has been a decline in support for other normative and analytical activities related to population in the regional commissions.

49. Almost all of the regional commissions stated that they had been able to secure extrabudgetary funds from a variety of sources, including Governments, foundations, and research institutes and non-governmental organizations.

50. ECLAC stated that the Latin American and Caribbean Demographic Centre had been actively seeking to identify potential donors. Those efforts had resulted in increased extrabudgetary resources for population activities for the period 2001-2003, totalling US$ 2,115,000, half of which had come from Governments and the other half from multilateral organizations, United Nations funds and programmes and universities and foundations.

51. The regular budget resources of the Population Activities Unit in ECE were increased by one P-2 post in 2002, in order to strengthen its work on population analysis. The Unit reported having obtained in excess of $1 million from Governments and academic and research institutions for the period 2000-2003 for support of major conferences and research. In collaboration with other academic and research institutions, it had competed on several occasions for European Union

research funds, but without success. Nonetheless, the Unit anticipated that a decrease in UNFPA resources in 2004 would negatively affect its research and analytical activities. It noted that, unless it obtained additional regular or extrabudgetary resources, it would be unable to provide guidance and leadership in data collection and analysis, or promote policy dialogue among ECE member States on emerging issues.

52. ESCAP stated that, as a result of active mobilization efforts, it had secured funds from the Government of Japan to supplement UNFPA funds to organize the Fifth Asian and Pacific Population Conference in 2002, which explored the interconnections between population and poverty, reviewed progress in implementing the Programme of Action of the International Conference on Population and Development and identified emerging concerns. ESCAP had also mobilized funds from the Government of the Republic of Korea to implement a technical cooperation project to improve data collection, analysis, and dissemination related to reproductive health and family planning programmes. Further resource mobilization efforts were being pursued with other bilateral donors to undertake capacity-building activities related to population ageing.

53. ESCWA has solicited extra funds from UNFPA for 2004, as well as contributions from its member countries and private sector organizations in support of activities in the field of economics and social development, including population-related research.

54. ECA obtained funds from member States and UNFPA for operational activities concerning monitoring the implementation process of the Dakar/Ngor Declaration of 1992, as well as the regional ministerial conference to mark the tenth anniversary of the International Conference on Population and Development, which will be held in Dakar in June 2004.

55. The Office of Internal Oversight Services considers that, since all the regional commissions took steps to raise extrabudgetary funds, recommendation 8 was implemented.

D. Intergovernmental review

Recommendation 11
Review by the Commission on Population and Development

The present report, and the conclusions and recommendations of the Committee for Programme and Coordination thereon, should be submitted to the Commission at its meeting in 2002, bearing in mind that the Commission, at its meeting in 2004, will review and appraise its work and that of the Secretariat.

56. The report of the Committee for Programme and Coordination on the evaluation was submitted to the Bureau of the Commission on Population and Development at its intersessional meeting in 2001 and to the thirty-fifth session of the Commission in 2002. The Office of Internal Oversight Services considers that recommendation 11 was adequately implemented.

III. Conclusions

57. **The triennial review leads to the conclusion that there has been significant progress made towards implementing the recommendations of the Committee for Programme and Coordination on the evaluation of the population programme. Over the past three years, efforts towards strengthening the Department of Economic and Social Affairs population subprogramme and its products have shown good results. The Population Division, which implements the subprogramme, has made efforts to clarify the methodology and assumptions underlying its projections and has adopted the practice of devoting space in all of its reports and publications to discussions of technical procedures and methods followed by the Division. It has devoted greater efforts to exploring the relationships between population and other aspects of development, such as the environment and education. In order to explore these relationships, the Division, in collaboration with other divisions in the Department and other offices and agencies of the United Nations system, has developed interdisciplinary approaches. The Division has solicited and obtained additional external support for its research. The effort to improve the use of reliable country data has been led by the Department's Statistics Division, which has provided support to national efforts to operate and maintain fundamental systems of civil registration and vital statistics through publications, training and convening expert group meetings. This, in turn has contributed to increasing the reliability of demographic country data, which is used by the Population Division to prepare estimates and projections.**

58. **The Population Division has placed increasing emphasis on free dissemination of information through the Internet, by posting the executive summaries, or the entire text, of its publications on its web site. While this practice has overcome delays in printing, it may also have had a negative effect on the sales of the Division's publications. The Division should work more closely with the Department of Public Information to facilitate the sales of its publications. Improvements were made to the design and navigation of the Population Information Network (POPIN) web site. The Office of Internal Oversight Services concludes that, while still useful as a web site, the value of POPIN as a network has decreased, due to the phasing out of the post of coordinator and the inactivity of the POPIN Advisory Committee. While the Office of Internal Oversight Services observed some degree of overlap between the Division and POPIN web sites, it also noted that there is no duplication of tasks and staffing related to the maintenance of the two web sites and that the Division has worked towards achieving complementarity between them.**

59. **The Office of Internal Oversight Services reviewed the population teams and/or units in the regional commissions which had undergone restructuring since 1994 (ECA, ESCAP, ESCWA). The objective of consolidating the population activities into larger social and development subprogammes in those regional commissions was to better integrate the population dimension in Governments' development planning and social policies. The Office of Internal Oversight Services found that progress had been made towards that objective and that, in one region, through those efforts, Governments' awareness concerning the linkages between population, the environment and food security had been raised. Progress was also made in increasing the level of exchanges**

among the regional commissions and between them and the population programme on working methods and procedures of the Department of Economic and Social Affairs. There were several examples of joint participation in conferences and working groups on emerging issues. With support from UNFPA, the regional commissions are continuing to focus on assisting countries in the collection of data related to implementation of the action goals agreed to at the International Conference on Population and Development held in Cairo in 1994. At the same time, however, there has been a decline of emphasis on basic research and data collection in the field of population in the regions. Several regional commissions were successful in obtaining contributions from Governments and research institutions for conferences and research. However, there is clearly a gap between the regional needs and the level of contributions received, particularly to support basic demographic research.

60. The Office of Internal Oversight Services considers that, given its experience and expertise, the Population Division can play a useful role in collaborating with the population units in the regional commissions on research. At a juncture when there is increasing awareness of the importance of the population dimension in analysing the issues of ageing, international migration and the impact of HIV/AIDS, it becomes increasingly important for Member States, multilateral organizations and the private sector to provide financial support to the United Nations population research agenda. The Division is well placed to raise awareness about this issue to the benefit of both the central programme and the regional population activities.

(*Signed*) Dileep **Nair**
Under-Secretary-General for Internal Oversight Services

Notes

[1] *Official Records of the General Assembly, Fifty-sixth Session, Supplement No. 16* (A/56/16), para. 375.

[2] United Nations publication, Sales No. 03.XIII.4.

[3] *Population, Education and Development: The Concise Report* (United Nations publication, Sales No. 03.XIII.11).

[4] United Nations publication, Sales No. 01.XIII.15.

[5] United Nations publication, Sales No. 01.XIII.17.

[6] E/AC.51/2001/3.

[7] *Report of the International Conference on Population and Development, Cairo, 5-13 September 1994* (United Nations publication, Sales No. E.95.XIII.18), chap. I, resolution 1, annex.